

**Federation Of Southern African Flyfishers**

**Second Edition**

**The Nedbank Guide  
To Flyfishing Venues  
In Southern Africa**

*Edited  
By  
Louis Wolluter*

**Made possible by Nedbank**



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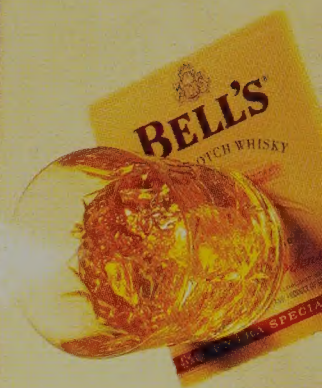


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# **The Nedbank Guide To Flyfishing Venues In Southern Africa**

**SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND  
ENLARGED**

**EDITED BY**

**LOUIS WOLHUTER**



**A FOSAF PUBLICATION  
1998**



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FOSAF, PO Box 98138, Sloan Park 2152.

ISBN 0-620-22165-8

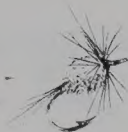
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Advertising B<sup>2</sup> Marketing cc  
Design by Moira van Winkel  
Layout by B<sup>2</sup> Marketing cc  
Drafting by Dot Farquaharson  
Fly illustrations by Iain Stewart  
Fish illustrations by Ian Ellithorne

Printed in the Republic of South Africa  
by Paragon Printers with the kind  
assistance of NEDBANK.

Front cover photo  
by Garth Brook.





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lyfishing in South Africa is experiencing an unprecedented growth phase! Not only are large numbers of recruits entering the sport but, considering the paucity of water resources in this country, it is quite astonishing to see just how many new flyfishing venues have opened their doors in the two years that have elapsed since this book was first published. Obviously supply is meeting demand. Mpumalanga has shown significant growth and thirteen new operators offering trout fishing have entered the market. In the Free State three public reservoirs have provided the bulk of the fishing to date but now there are indications that the core of a new trout fishing area is in the making in the Maluti Mountains near Clarens. Natal leads the way in the number of new ventures established as well as in the total number on offer, which has increased from twenty-seven to forty-seven. Lesotho, long known as a prime trout fishing territory, sees the addition of a potentially great new fishery in the huge Katse Dam. In the northeastern highlands of the Eastern Cape the Wild Trout Association has spread its wings and now also includes participants from Lady Grey and the Maclear-Ugie Districts. The previous edition featured a handful of establishments offering accommodation in this area – currently there are simply too many to list individually. Maclear, Ugie and Elliot received scant mention two years ago but since then Maclear has undergone a renaissance and has re-established itself as one of the blue-ribbon trout fisheries in the country. Only a small number of anglers knew of the large fish being taken in the Queenstown area and they were not exactly broadcasting this information. Now the local club has opened these waters to visitors on a day-ticket basis.

But this enormous ground swell has not only been confined to the trout-fishing industry – the indigenous species are also coming in for their share of attention. Float-trip operators are now offering flyfishing trips for yellowfish and catfish on the section of the Vaal between Parys and Skandinawiëdrif as well as on the lower Orange River. In the Kimberley area a tour operator organizes flyfishing packages which include access to some of the choice private waters in the region. A thoughtful and informative article focuses on the endangered yellowfishes of the Western Cape including that legendary gamester the Clanwilliam yellowfish. Several venues in this region have become aware of the angling potential of these species and it is gratifying to see that they actively encourage catch-and-release fishing. In the Okavango Swamp,





tigerfishing is, apparently, on the decline and we could not find anyone with sufficient experience or local knowledge of flyfishing in the Swamp to contribute an article. On the Zambezi River, however, things are going great guns. Previously we listed four lodges or camps offering flyfishing for tigerfish and other species. There are now no less than sixteen and more are under construction. It is noticeable that concerted attempts are being made to promote the capture of tigerfish on fly. Flyfishing for catfish (barbel) in the Pretoria-Johannesburg area has seen little change but on the Vaal River rather unusual techniques have been developed to capture the "thugs", as local anglers, refer to large catfish.

Bass fishermen will find new and interesting information on venues in the provinces north of the Vaal River as well as in the Western Cape. There is also a contribution on nembwe fishing in Zimbabwe. This handsome and aggressive fish, one of a host of bream species in the Zimbabwe River system, is renowned not only for its fighting ability but also for its exceptional quality on the table. Flyfishing for bream is a field that needs much more investigation and experimentation and we hope there will be sufficient progress to report on it more comprehensively in a future issue.

On the saltwater side we had requests after the last issue to expand this section and to be more specific about various localities. This we have done and saltwater coverage has been increased by about fifty percent. The section on the Eastern Cape coastline, which probably offers more opportunities for saltwater flyfishing than any other region in South Africa, has been enlarged significantly.

It is obvious that in a publication of this kind a greater or lesser amount of repetition is unavoidable. Nonetheless, we have managed to incorporate a substantial quantity of new information in this edition whilst retaining, virtually unchanged, some of the best material from the previous issue. Trout fisheries in the Western Cape can literally be counted on two hands and there is little likelihood that they will be increased in the foreseeable future. In the previous edition Ed Herbst covered these waters in such fine detail we were able to reprint the chapter with only slight modifications. The same reasoning applies to Joni Botha's seminal article on the Bazaruto Archipelago. We discussed present conditions there in detail with local guides and anglers familiar with the area. The consensus was that no one was likely





to produce a more definitive or relevant work and only a scant amount of information had to be updated. The greatly increased map coverage in the current edition is, in our opinion, a major improvement. Previously we had only ten maps whereas this edition features twenty-five two-colour maps that focus in much greater detail on individual areas rather than on regions

The success of the first edition of this book is obviously attributable to its meeting a long-felt need and the quality of the material submitted by so many contributors. I can also state with considerable confidence that it contributed in no small way to the upsurge in interest in flyfishing and its many facets. Hopefully flyfishers in South Africa and elsewhere will find this second edition as useful and informative as the first.

Louis Wolhuter  
Johannesburg  
November 1997



*The editorial committee has accepted in good faith the information on fisheries and establishments provided in this book, knowing that it was not possible for all contributors to visit or examine each venue personally. The committee cannot, therefore, accept responsibility for any inaccuracies or loss or damage that may result therefrom. The committee is also aware that there may be venues, which for various reasons, were missed in the compilation of this volume. Any such establishment wishing to feature or advertise in the next issue is invited to contact FOSAF at PO Box 98138, Sloan Park, 2152 or phone / Fax (011) 462-6687.*



Nedbank's eagerness for the conservation of the environment is demonstrated in the different environmental initiatives the bank is involved in. Since the introduction of The Nedbank Guide to Flyfishing in Southern Africa in 1996, Nedbank in association with the Federation of Southern African Flyfishers (FOSAF), has produced a second edition of the guide, to further explore flyfishing venues in southern Africa.

Flyfishing is rapidly becoming one of the fastest growing sports in the region. We are pleased that this guide has become a useful source for flyfishers to visit different venues throughout the region in order to enjoy this sport. Featured in the second edition is extensive information on indigenous species.

By supporting the production of this guide, Nedbank's stakeholders - clients, employees and shareholders - hope to contribute positively to the economy of South Africa through the promotion of eco-tourism throughout the country. The revenue generated from the sale of the guide will further assist in fishing-related conservation initiatives. In doing so, Nedbank is giving back to the communities from which it operates.

Nedbank's commitment to conservation is also further demonstrated by the bank founding and funding The Green Trust since 1990. The Trust was launched to help conserve South Africa's threatened environment and to protect natural systems, ecology and the biological diversity of the country. To financially sustain The Green Trust, Nedbank designed unique and innovative affinity products, which includes a cheque account, savings account, ATM cards, credit cards (with an added value of being linked to SAA's frequent flyer programme, Voyager) and a unique 'green' cellular phone.

On behalf of Nedbank stakeholders, we wish all flyfishers a successful year. May the enjoyment of the sport be the sole aim throughout the year.

Richard Laubscher  
Nedbank Chief Executive







he Federation of Southern African Flyfishers (FOSAF), together with Nedbank, is proud to be of service to flyfishers and lovers of the great outdoors in publishing this Second Edition of the Nedbank Guide to Flyfishing Venues in Southern Africa.

In this issue we introduce a number of new authors, new venues, a wealth of additional information, more detailed maps and the latest telephone numbers of venues and service providers. The publication is intended as a working manual providing valuable information on flyfishing for the large diversity of fish species, where to fish for them and where to stay in places that are open to the public.

The sport of flyfishing is characterised by the willingness of its exponents to share information unselfishly. FOSAF acknowledges the cooperative effort by the authors of the excellent articles in this issue which presents a wealth of knowledge and research for your angling enjoyment.

We appreciate the untiring efforts of Louis Wolhuter in soliciting and editing articles, the production of maps and for striving to add value to each edition of Flyfishing Venues. Garth Brook is responsible for liaison, advertising and layout which he has carried out with a great deal of enthusiasm, dedication and expertise. We are grateful to FOSAF members and friends for information and advice which have proved invaluable.

We would like to thank Nedbank for their corporate responsibility towards sport and the environment and for their continued partnership in sponsoring this Guide for your reading pleasure.

The proceeds from the sale of this Guide will allow FOSAF to fund essential research projects and provide a professional service to preserve and promote flyfishing in Southern Africa for posterity.

South Africa is blessed with a great diversity of climate and with a concomitant variety of flora and fauna. This rich tapestry, together with breathtaking natural scenic beauty, makes our country an attractive international destination. The Nedbank Guide to Flyfishing Venues in Southern Africa will encourage visitors to our game parks and other tourist attractions, to pack a fly rod and take time off to sample our unique angling opportunities.

Bill Mincher - Chairman FOSAF



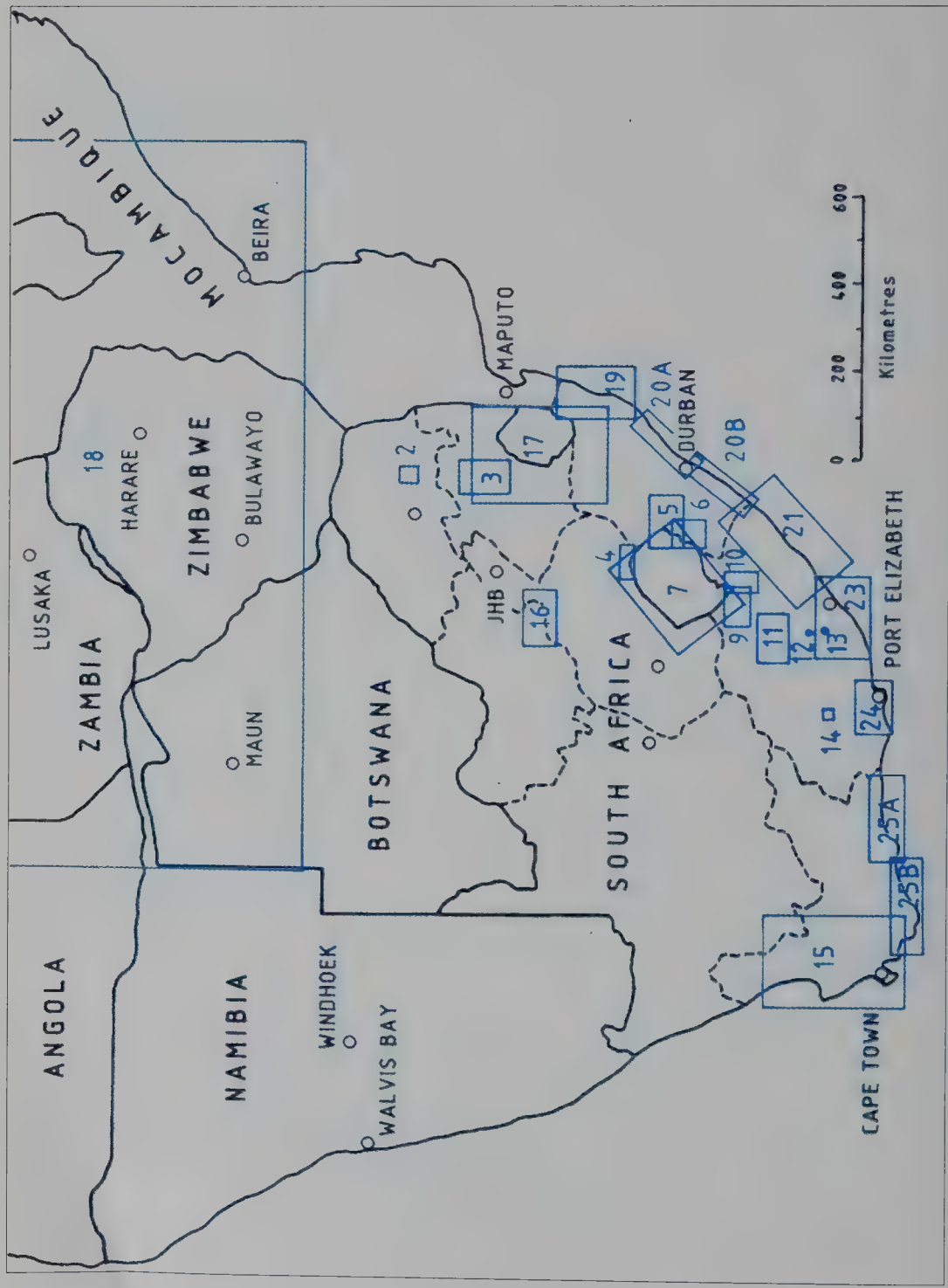


FIGURE 1: INDEX MAP OF TEXT FIGURES



By Alan Deverson



THE TROUT WATERS OF NORTHERN PROVINCE are situated below the Wolkberg Escarpment in the Haenertsburg – Magoebaskloof area (Figure 2). The original vegetation was rolling grassland with indigenous forest occurring in the gullies, along watercourses and the edge of the escarpment. Today, unfortunately, the grasslands have largely succumbed to mistbelt cancer – endless plantations of exotic pines.

In the tourist brochures, Magoebaskloof is known as the “land of the silver mist” and during normal rainfall years, misty rain occurs fairly frequently during the summer months (October to April). The autumn months are usually mild whereas winter nights are cold and the days pleasantly warm and calm. Visitors are advised to bring along clothing for warm as well as cold wet weather. Haenertsburg, a thriving village founded a year after Johannesburg, is 60 kilometres from Pietersburg and 30 kilometres from Tzaneen on the R71.

Trout fishing is concentrated on the Broederstroom and the Helpmekaar River, and on various dams on them such as Dap Naude, Stanford and Ebenezer. The Haenertsburg Trout Association (HTA) controls fishing on most of these waters. Only flyfishing is permitted except on Ebenezer Dam where spinning and bait fishing are also allowed. Float-tubes and kick-boats may be used on all the dams but not within 30 metres of a bank angler. Popular flies include Walker’s Killer, Mrs. Simpson, Invicta, Zulu, Coachman, Woolly Worm, Green Nymph, imitative dragonfly nymphs, sedge and beetle patterns.

## DAP NAUDE DAM (1)\*

Dap Naude Dam is a rainbow trout fishery said to contain naturally spawned as well as stocked fish. This 50-hectare stillwater is open to fishing all year but the best period is from October to the end of May. The shallows at the inlet of the Broederstroom produce well. During the summer, there are good hatches of an orange beetle and of various buzzers (midges) and on those occasions it makes sense

*\*The numbers in brackets correspond to those indicating the localities on the map of each region*

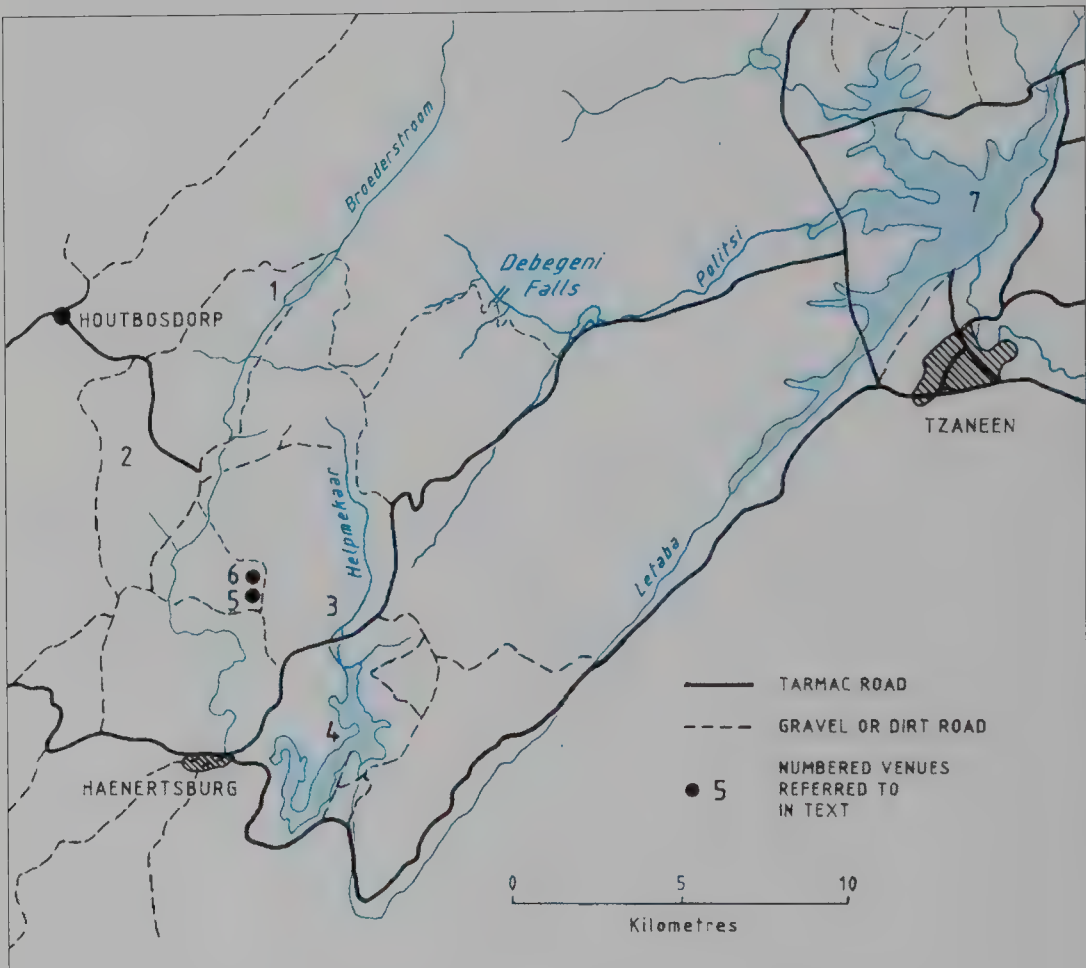


FIGURE 2: TROUT AND BASS WATERS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

to use flies tied to imitate these insects. When the dam is full, bank access is scant but rowing boats are available to permit holders. The daily bag limit is 6 fish per rod and no more than 4 permits per day are made available to visitors.

**MOUNTAIN FLYFISHING (2)**

This establishment provides the only public access to the Broederstroom. Travellers on the R71 from Pietersburg turn left at the Veekraal signpost for 5 kilometres, and then left again at the fork to Houtbosdorp for a further 3 to 4 kilometres. Coming in the opposite direction from Tzaneen, turn right at the Houtbosdorp signpost and continue straight on. Mountain Flyfishing has fishing



rights to two stretches of the Broederstroom totaling about 6,5 kilometres and starting about 3 kilometres below Dap Naude Dam. Although there are rainbow trout in the river the current policy, according to the owner, is to stock only brown trout. Fishing is also available in six attractive dams. Visitors can fish on a day-ticket basis or stay over in a fully equipped self-catering cottage that sleeps six. Call (015) 276-4311 or cell phone 083 255 7817 for information and reservations.

**HELPMEKAAR RIVER (3)**

The Helpmekaar River has its source close to the top of Magoebaskloof Pass and flows south for 5 kilometres or so before entering Stanford College (formerly Troutwaters Inn) property. HTA members, their guests and permit holders have access to about 1 kilometre of river above the College.

**EBENEZER DAM (4)**

This 340-hectare dam falls under the control of the Northern Province Water Board and supports good populations of rainbow trout, smallmouth and largemouth bass, various species of kurper, eel, carp, catfish (barbel) and a small number of brown trout. The dam is very deep and the wall was built where the Helpmekaar joined the Broederstroom to become the Letaba River. Fishing is best around the numerous inlets and close to the bank in early morning and late evening. Good catches of mature trout are recorded during May, June and July. A fishing permit system will be introduced during 1997/98. The cost is not yet known but the proposed bag limit is six fish per day with a limit of three of any specie. All boats require a permit issued by the Water Board.

**CHEERIO FARM (5)**

A small dam, which Cheerio Farm shares with Cheerio Gardens, is stocked with trout for the use of visitors. Accommodation is provided in two self-catering 4-bedded chalets, one 6-bedded chalet, and two bed-and-breakfast units sleeping two apiece. The turn-off is on the R71, between the Broederstroom and the Helpmekaar River, and is clearly signposted. For reservations phone (015) 276-1804 or (011) 942-1303 or 082 651 7313.

**CHEERIO GARDENS (6)**

This farm is renowned for its spectacular display of flowering azaleas and cherry trees in the spring. It lies immediately to the north of the previous venue and



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**Magoebaskloof Lodge**

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**Cheerio Gardens**

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**Mountain Flyfishing**

Dave Pirie  
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**Cheerio Farm**

Carol Noné  
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Megan Gardiner  
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**Bali Will Will**

Francis McComb  
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**Tenby Gardens**

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**Glenshiel Country Lodge**

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**The Glen**

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**Greenridge Country House**

AnnaMarie Theron  
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**The Zeederberg**

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**Kopjie Alleen**

Byadladi Tourist Association  
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**Kings Walden Estate**

David and Tana Hilton Barber  
(015) 307 3262

**Letaba River Lodge**

Tracy Nel  
(015) 307 2604

**Waterval Rondavel**

Aria Merkestein  
(015) 276 2120

**Little Haven Camping**

Glynnis Geere  
(015) 276 4273 or 082 452 3708

**Wegraakbosch Farm**

Sylvia Thompson  
(015) 276 1811



offers trout fishing in four ponds, one of which it shares with Cheerio Farm. A self-catering cottage sleeps four and, together with the ponds, is set in the midst of 20 hectares of these beautiful gardens. For information phone (015) 276-4424.

**OTHER ATTRACTIONS**

Magoebaskloof is situated about 30 minutes away from the warm lowveld town of Tzaneen where the nearby Tzaneen Dam (7) is a well-known bass fishing water. The tea estates, Debegeni Waterfall and the forest drive form part of the local scenic attractions. Further afield the Cycad forest and the town of Duiwelskloof are worth a visit. The Woodbush boasts the largest indigenous forest in the Northern Province. Hiking is a very popular activity and the area has some of the country's premier trails.

**INFORMATION AND FACILITIES**

Fishing permits are obtainable in Haenertsburg from The Elms [Tel. (015) 276-4405] which is open from Tuesdays to Sundays, and from Lombard's Pharmacy in Tzaneen. At present the daily charge is R30,00 per rod. For information on fishing call the HTA at (015) 276-4472.

A wide variety of accommodation is available in the area. The prospective visitor is referred to the Byadladi Tourist Association, Tel. (015) 276-4472, for full and comprehensive information, or try (015) 276-1306. A note of warning – at the time of writing the telephone numbers in the region were in a state of utter confusion owing to the switchover from manual to automatic dialling. The area code for Tzaneen is now (015) and that for Haenertsburg is (015272) for manual exchanges and (0152276) or (015276) for automatic exchanges. Until such time as order is restored, please get TELKOM to sort out your problems. That could prove to be even more confusing.



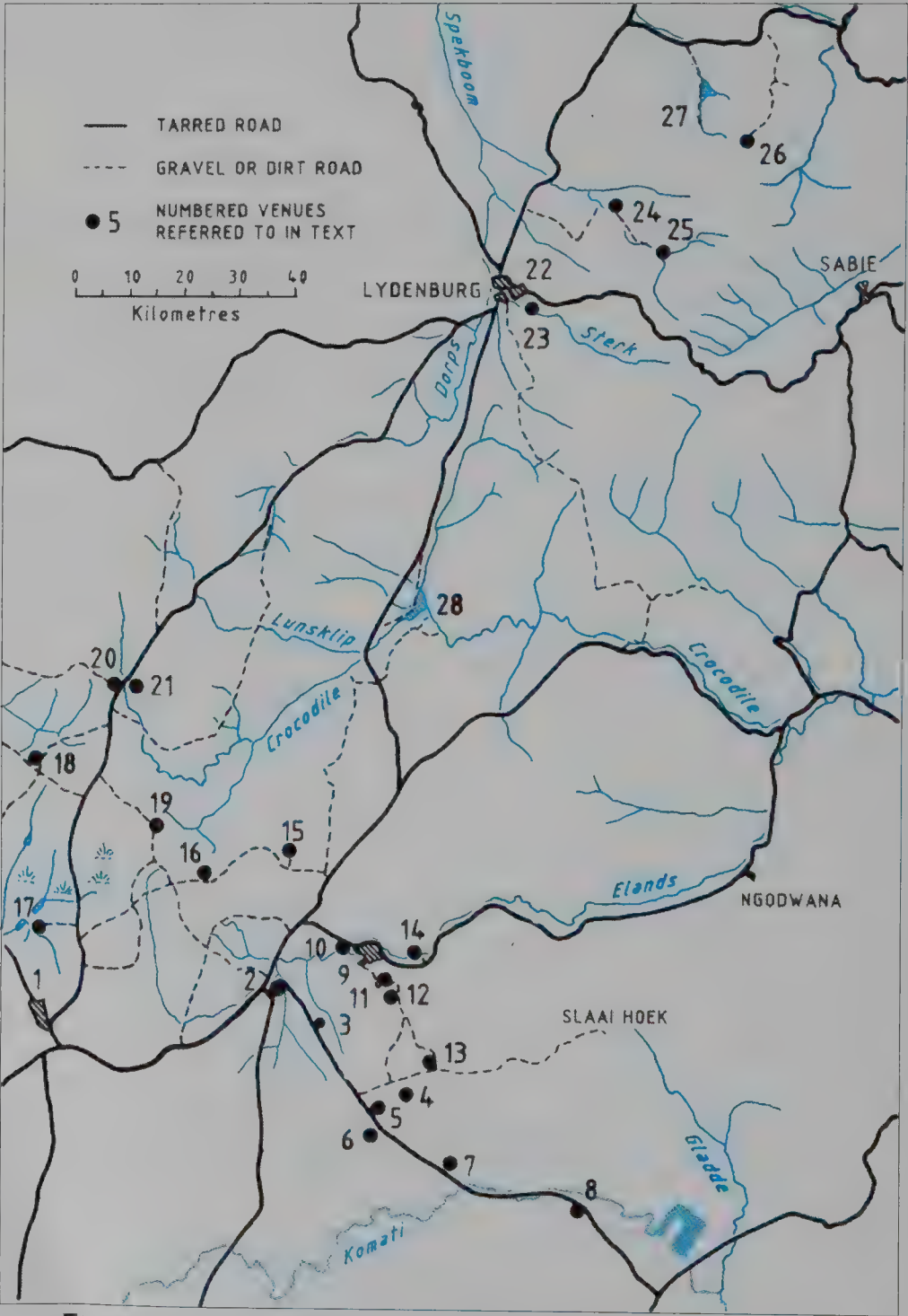


FIGURE 3: SOME TROUT AND BASS WATERS IN MPUMALANGA



By Garth Brook



THE NEAREST TROUT FLYFISHING AREAS IN MPUMALANGA are, at present, within two hours drive of Johannesburg and slightly less from Pretoria. The N4 from Pretoria, which is joined by the N12 from Johannesburg a few kilometres past Witbank, is the major access route from the west. Belfast, just off the N4 is the first of several villages around which trout-fishing facilities have been established. Taking Belfast as the southwestern extremity, the “trout belt”, now proclaimed as a flyfishing area, extends northward for about 60 kilometres, northeastward for almost 100 kilometres and eastward for approximately 50 kilometres (**Figure 3**). Within this 3 500-square-kilometre region some two dozen streams are proclaimed flyfishing waters. Of these, short sections of five, at most, are open to the public. But Mpumalanga’s claim to trout fame is based not on its streams but on the myriad of dams that have mushroomed without control across the countryside and, in addition to providing flyfishing for many, also pose a serious ecological threat.

Before embarking on a trip to this area however, the following selection of flies should be placed firmly within one’s flybox as the Mpumalanga weather can deliver all four seasons within any one day thus testing even the most experienced flyfisher. For stillwaters imitative dragon and damselfly nymphs and Woolly Buggers in various colours. For dragon imitations use sizes ranging from 4 to 8, for damsels sizes 8 to 12 and for the Buggers sizes 6 to 4. Smaller food forms are best imitated or suggested by Gold-ribbed Hare’s Ear, Black and Peacock Spider, Coch-y-Bondhu, Cased Caddis, Corixa, Bloodworm and Marabou Tadpole, mostly in sizes 10 to 14. During autumn, Zonkers in sizes 6 to 10 perform well at times whereas in winter, the Orangeade in sizes 6 to 10 is a worthy standby. To fish the surface or the film, use the DDD (6 to 12), Adams (12 to 18), Elk-hair Caddis (12 to 16), Suspender Midges in black, red or olive (10 to 16), Trico and Caenis spinners (18 to 22), Beetles (12 to 16) and Black Ants (18 to 22) as conditions determine. For subsurface fishing in streams, effective patterns are Woolly Worms in sizes 10 to 14, Red Fox Squirrel-hair Nymphs, Bead-head Caddis, Coch-y-Bondhu and soft hackles such as the Lunsklip Spider, all



(Belfast Trout Deli) t/a

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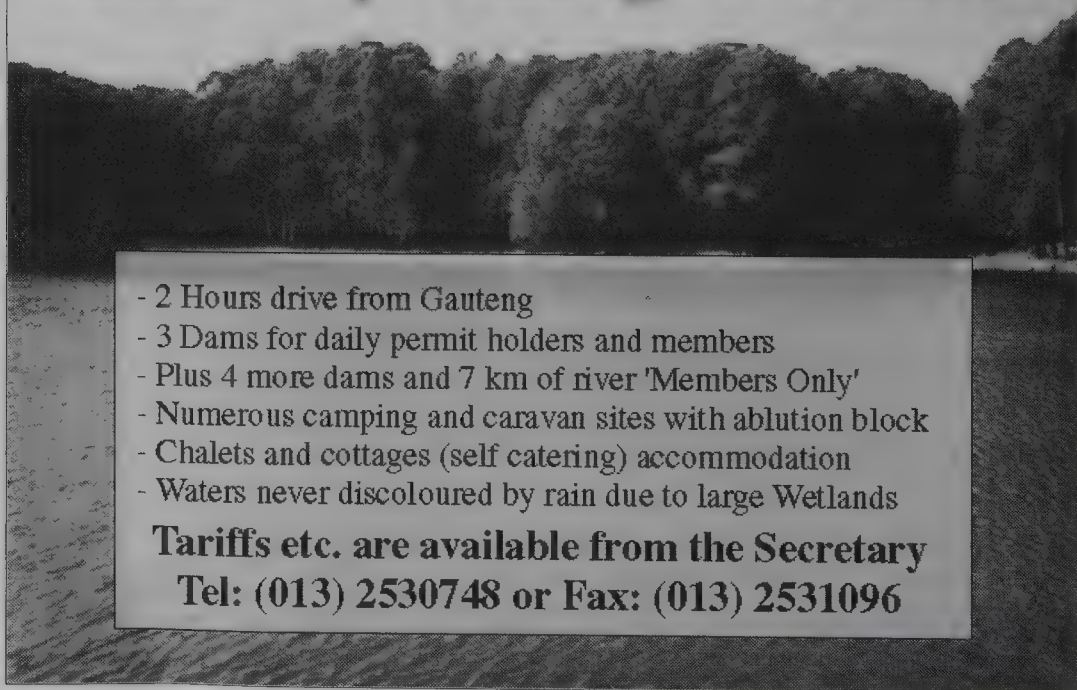
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in sizes 12 to 16. Dry flies that work well, include the Royal Wulff, Royal Trude, Yellow Humpy, Elk-Hair Caddis, Parachute Adams, DDD, Black Foam Beetles and Black Ants in sizes 12 to 16.

**BELFAST (1)**

The Belfast Flyfishing Association manages the fishery, which consists of seven dams and a feeder stream. All of the dams are stocked with rainbow trout but only three are available to flyfishers that are not members of the Association. Non-members may fish Dams 1, 2 and 6. Float-tubes and kick-boats are permitted on Dams 1 and 2 only. Visitors may obtain daily rod tickets at the BFFA office at R30 per person. The telephone number is (01325) 30748. The bag limit is two fish per day but extra fish may be taken on the provision that an additional R30,00 is paid per two trout taken with a maximum limit of six for the day. All fish in excess of the bag limit must be returned unharmed.

From Belfast, continue along the N4 for a further 15 minutes to:

**MACHADODORP (2)**

The town lies on the Elands River, which today is under strict control of the Upper Elands Conservancy in cooperation with the Machadodorp Flyfishing Club. The club has its own trout hatchery and stocks the river and dam on demand. The stocking program is managed by catch-card input, and visitors are reminded to complete these in detail - failing which re-entry to these waters may prove difficult. In addition to the Elands River, the Machadodorp Flyfishing Club offers good fishing in the 4-hectare Centenary Dam. The club discourages wading in the dam and has constructed a number of jetties for anglers who wish to reach out and fish the deeper water in the former riverbed and the weed banks that have since developed. Float-tubing and kick-boating are permitted and for the bank fisherman there is an added facility in the form of a sand pier jutting out to the middle of the dam. The section of river immediately upstream from the dam, adjoining the campsite, is unobstructed and ideal for beginners. The club's jurisdiction over the Elands River extends downstream for 7 kilometres from the point where the overflow from the dam is discharged back into the river. This is a rugged untouched catch-and-release section typifying traditional Mpumalanga stream fishing. Visitors can obtain daily rod tickets, membership forms (if required) and a copy of the club newsletter, Machado



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TO THE '98  
TROUT FESTIVAL**



Contact details - telephone 01325 60092 ask for Alta.



Mainstream, at the Roxy Café. The telephone number is (01325) 60092. Permits cost R25,00 per person per day and the bag limit is two fish, after which fishing must cease. No additional fishing, even catch-and-release, is permitted after the bag limit has been met.

Accommodation in and around Machadodorp includes bed-and-breakfast at Pat's Place, Tel. (01325) 60261, which can accommodate eight couples, and is within walking distance of the Elands River and Centenary Dam. The local country club, the Belle Vista, Tel. (01325) 60006, 6 kilometres outside Machadodorp on the Carolina road, has three rooms available, each sleeping two, and offers self or full-catering facilities. The town also has a caravan park and camping site. Details on this and other accommodation are obtainable from Alta at telephone number (01325) 60092.

**MOUNTAIN RHEBUCK FARM (3)**

This fishery can be found 5 kilometres outside Machadodorp on the Badplaas road. At a signpost showing Mountain Rhebuck Farm turn left into the farm where visitors will find two cottages and three trout-stocked dams. Each cottage sleeps eight and has hot and cold water with gas cooking facilities. For bookings phone (013252) and ask for 1222 or phone cell number 083 701 2244.

**SKOONSPRUIT VALLE (4)**

Along the same road but 13 kilometres from Machadodorp turn left onto the Slaaihoek road. After this turn, continue on for a further 2 kilometres and look for a farm gate on your right. This is the only sign of entry into this venue and one is cautioned to travel slowly in order not to miss this gate. This venue offers a large trout-stocked dam and an 8-bed rondavel. Phone (013252) and ask for 5512.

**DAVIES TROUT COTTAGES (5)**

Along the Badplaas road 15 kilometres from Machadodorp on the left hand side one will find the Davies trout cottages. This venue offers a rondavel sleeping eight and a chalet that sleeps ten. The venue offers in total three dams and a stream. The telephone number is (013256) 0332.

**CRAWFIES TROUT LODGE (6)**

Approximately 18 kilometres from Machadodorp on the Badplaas road is a signpost on the right hand side displaying the name Crawfies Trout Lodge. This venue has seven dams and a fully equipped house with sleeping facilities for twenty. To book, phone (013252) and ask for 2303 or call cell-phone 082 495 9634.



### **BOSHOEK TROUT COTTAGE (7)**

To reach this venue, follow the Badplaas road from Machadodorp for 25 kilometres and turn left at the signpost. Fishing is available along 4 kilometres of the Bosloop Spruit and in a 1,7-hectare trout-stocked dam. A self-contained cottage on the property can accommodate six to eight guests. For bookings phone (017) 844 1254.

### **NTSHENGANE LODGE (8)**

At the foot of the escarpment, 39 kilometres outside Machadodorp on the Badplaas road is a sign on the right hand side of the road displaying Ntshengane Lodge. This venue has seven small dams offering trout fishing and has, in addition to these, 5,5 kilometres of the Komati River. This river while stocked with trout for winter flyfishing can be very productive in the early spring for yellowfish. The venue also offers a 5-bedroomed house, a 3-bedroomed family cottage and two linked rondavels that can sleep five in total. The telephone number is (017) 844-1233.

For the touring angler continuing along the N4 the next port of call is:

# ***BOSHOEK***

Highly commended by AA Travel Guides and SAA.  
**COTTAGE**

Overlooking a truly magnificent dam, stream and waterfalls.  
Offering you exceptional trout fishing in both stream and dam.

Tel. / Fax: 01784 41254

# ***Ntshengane* LODGE**

*A Unique Country Experience*

There is excellent dam flyfishing for trout during the rainy season and colder months. And, in addition, the clear cool Komati River offers traditional Flyfishing for both Rainbow Trout and Yellow fish.

#### **Accommodation**

**The Lodge** - A luxurious five-bedroomed home which sleeps 10.

**The Rose Cottage** - A three-bedroomed family cottage which sleeps 8.

**The Rondawels** - Two interlinked rondawels which sleep 5.

**Telephone** - Wendy or John Clarke (017) 844-1233



# If your wife thinks a red eyed damsel is a blonde after a night out... talk to us.

**W**e know the feeling. You're talking flyfishing and she thinks you

are up to something. So what's new? She thought you were crazy to crouch near the weedbed slowly inching the damsel fly along. She couldn't share your excitement at catching the brownie that was holing up near that rock, with the "impossible" drift. She gazed in amazement when you insisted on hurling a bunch of feathers while standing waist deep in the surf. She finally gave up on you when you spoke about avoiding crocs while tiger fishing on the Limpopo.

So... come and to talk to us. We know how you feel, we've been there. Come in to the shop,

we'll listen to your stories, and we'll tell you some of our own. We'll help you plan your next trip, even book it for you. Come browse our range of quality flyfishing tackle, flytying material and equipment.

We'll rig it up for you and show you how to use it. We'll answer any questions you may have and we'll share what we know.

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FLY FISHING

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# A TREAT FOR



"CHEETAH"  
(*Acinonyx jubatus*)



"SERVAL"  
(*Felis serval*)



"CARACAL"  
(*Felis caracal*)

South African collectors have something to look forward to, with the recent launch of a set of unique public telephone cards, depicting South Africa's wild cats - from the lion down to the small spotted cat.

These collectable, highly decorative telephone cards have come about as a result of co-operation between Telkom and Nedbank and their commitment to the environment.

Over and above raising funds for The Green Trust, through the use of the bank's Green Affinity banking products, Nedbank has come up with yet another innovative way of financing the Trust through the introduction of these phone cards. It is hoped that these collectors' items will raise R100 000 for The Green Trust.

The unique set consists of six phone cards plus matching prints by renowned artist, Fuz Caforio, all for just R425, but - who knows? - in 20 years' time, they could be worth more than R1 million! So place



# COLLECTORS



"LION"  
(*Panthera leo*)



"SMALL SPOTTED CAT"  
(*Felis nigripes*)



"LEOPARD"  
(*Panthera pardus*)

your orders now through any Nedbank branch and don't miss out on these beautiful cards, since only 1 000 have been printed worldwide.

"In sponsoring these telephone cards, Nedbank acknowledges that wherever people live, the environment is still part of them all the time. Over the years, the bank has continually been committed to preserving and nurturing the environment. In 1990, this commitment was proclaimed through Nedbank establishing and funding The Green Trust, set to promote and conserve the environment through a number of initiatives throughout the country," says Dr Ivan May, Nedbank's assistant general manager, Strategic and Tactical Marketing.

All along, The Green Trust has been financially sustained by funds raised from Nedbank's 'Green Affinity' banking products, which include cheque accounts, savings accounts, ATM cards, credit cards (with an added bonus of being linked to SAA's Frequent Flyer programme, Voyager) and a special 'green' cellular telephone.



### WATERVAL BOVEN (9)

This village, also on the Elands River, is 17 kilometres down the road from Machadodorp. The name, which means "Above the Waterfall" in Dutch, is derived from the picturesque waterfall nearby. The Waterval Boven Trout Association (WBTA) manages the fishing in three dams as well as on 9 kilometres of the Elands. Riverview Dam (1,3 hectares), Kransview Dam (2,3 hectares) and Members Only Dam (1,2 hectares) are on the outskirts of the village and within short walking distance of each other. The bag limit is two fish per angler, per day but, if handled carefully, anglers may release any uninjured trout landed. The river features deep pools alternating with pocket water and offers rewarding fishing when water conditions are favourable. The trout population, at present, is not self-sustaining and is replenished with stocked fish. Members and visitors may not fish the river unless they have booked a beat in advance. Daily rod tickets cost R30,00 and are available from the WBTA, Tel. (01325)

## *Retreat to Splendid Seclusion*

*Imagine mists rising from water in the first light of dawn... the fresh smell of pine vying with the heady aroma of freshly brewed coffee... amber flames flickering in an open hearth fireplace...*

Cradled in a forest estate in the Mpumalanga Highlands, set in the midst of a declared Natural Heritage Site, Lakenvlei Forest Lodge offers you quiet refuge in charming log chalets each with a view of the vlei.



*Explore the countryside on foot or mountain bike. Enjoy a quiet day's fly fishing or an exhilarating outride on horseback. At night retreat to the interior of your exquisitely furnished chalet and warm up to the glow of a blazing log fire.*

Near Belfast, Lakenvlei is an easy two hour drive away from Johannesburg and Pretoria.

For reservations contact tel. (01325) 30550 or fax (01325) 30844.



70252. This same number may be used for the Elands River Fly Shop and the Boven Trout Lodge.

Visitors to Waterval Boven have a choice of accommodation in town or in the district. The Boven Trout Lodge in town is centrally located, has self-catering facilities and is well attuned to the needs of flyfishers. Phone the number above for reservations. Hotels in the area include Berg Water Lodge, Tel. (01325) 70104, about 17 kilometres east of town on the N4, or the Malaga Hotel, Tel. (013) 734-4933, a few kilometres further on. The local municipality runs the Elandskrans resort, about 2 kilometres from town on the Slaaihoek road. Seventeen self-catering chalets are available as well as a restaurant, pool and other facilities. For information and reservations phone (01325) 70175.

Several privately owned operations in or near Waterval Boven offer flyfishing to the public and include the following:



## *Waterval Boven*

*Trout Association - Forel Assosiasie*

Day visitors and members are able to flyfish 9 km of the Elands River as well as 3 dams offering the serious flyfisherman a total fishing area of 5 hectares - all well stocked with both Rainbow and Brown trout.

Only two hours from Gauteng, WBTA offers excellent all year round cost effective flyfishing on the Mpumalanga escarpment.

**For more information contact:  
Jan de Beer on 01325 70252.  
Or write to WBTA, PO Box 50, Waterval Boven**





### **EASTERN LINE TROUT (10)**

Situated on the outskirts of town, this farm has four dams up to 1 hectare in area and about 4 kilometres of stream fishing on the Elands River. Self-catering accommodation is provided in a refurbished farmhouse that sleeps eleven. Only overnight guests are permitted to fish these waters. Phone (013257) 0119 for reservations.

### **TEGWAAN (11)**

By continuing 4.3 kilometres along the Slaaihoek road from Waterval Boven, one will find Tegwaan on the left-hand side. This venue offers a 6-bedroomed cottage and dam. Bed and breakfast as well as full catering is available. For information dial (0132572) and ask for 1803 or try the cellphone number 082 600 5681.

### **WINDFALL FARM (12)**

On the right hand side just 5 kilometres from Waterval Boven on the Slaaihoek road is Windfall Farm. This facility offers one trout-stocked dam and a 6-bedded fully equipped self-catering cottage. Phone (0132572) and ask for 1830.

### **CRANE CREEK FARM (13)**

From Waterval Boven town follow the gravel road past the hospital and proceed for 10 kilometres to a junction. Take the left fork and continue for another 5 kilometres to the Crane Creek turn-off on the right. This venue offers four dams ranging in size from about 0,5 hectare to 3 hectares and is situated in a well-treed scenic valley. Day permits cost R35,00 per rod plus R35,00 per kilogram of fish caught. A self-catering cottage, sleeping six adults and four children, is available. A bunkhouse, sleeping up



## **Vlakfontein**

Accommodation And Flyfishing

2 Fully Equipped Cottages

7 Earth Dams and 4 Weirs

**Contact : (012) 664-2394 Or 082 894 0119**

to twenty adults, is also available for club, clinic and corporate events. Other activities include clay-pigeon shooting, horse riding, hiking and bird watching. For full details phone (013252) and ask for 3303. Please note that this number may change shortly.

#### ROUND THE BEND (14)

Pass Waterval Boven and continue on the N4 for 3 kilometres beyond the tunnel to the Waterfall Lodge sign. Turn left here and continue for 900 metres along the dirt road to the Chancellor Madison signpost. At this point look for a ploughshare with the name "Round the Bend" written on it. This venue offers 3 kilometres on the lower Elands River as well as two dams. There is also a 6-bedded cottage that can sleep eight, on the farm. For details phone (0132572) and ask for 1703.

#### MACHADO TROUT STUD (15)

Pass Machadodorp on the N4 and then turn left onto the R36 to Lydenburg. Approximately 5 kilometres further on turn left onto the Goedewil road and, after 500 metres, left again onto the Elandsfontein road for 3,5 kilometres where a sign, Machado Trout Stud, displays the entrance into this farm on the right. Follow 3

## WATERFALL TROUT

Suppliers of live trout for your dam or stream.



Meandering through the Badfontein

Valley are some fine and quick flowing

trout waters. Foremost amongst these, you will

find the Lunsklip River - home of Waterfall Trout.



For Your Trout Requirements  
Contact Gerrie vd Merwe at tel/fax 013-2351248



kilometres of dirt road where one will find three cottages, sleeping ten, six and four respectively as well as ten dams and eight weirs filled by the Swartkopspruit. To book, phone cell number 082 4957 337 or (013252) and ask for 2840.

#### **TREE FERNS TROUT LODGE (VLAKFONTEIN) (16)**

Tree Ferns Trout Lodge, on the farm Vlakfontein, is situated in the so-called "Mpumalanga Trout Triangle" formed by Belfast, Dullstroom and Machadodorp. Each of these towns lies about 20 kilometres from the farm and can be reached by well-maintained roads. At an altitude of 2000 metres, Vlakfontein is one of the highest trout-fishing venues along the Eastern Escarpment. It has an abundant supply of cold water from a number of strong, permanent fountains, some of which feed the trout dams. There are at present seven earth dams, four weirs and a pool normally well stocked with rainbow trout. Tree Ferns Trout Lodge consists of two furnished stone cottages (Rhebuck and Arum) each with three spacious bedrooms (2 beds each), an open-plan lounge/dining room/kitchen with hearth. For rates and bookings call Chris at (012) 664-2394 or cell 082 894 0119 at all hours or Marietjie at (012) 671-7435 during office hours.

Returning to Belfast, anglers have the choice of an alternate route into the heart of trout country, the R540 which leads to Dullstroom and then on to Lydenburg.

#### **LAKENSVLEI (17)**

The turnoff to Lakensvlei Forest Lodge is 10 kilometres north of Belfast on the R540 and is clearly signposted. The lodge nestles within the pine trees of a forest estate and overlooks a wetland area that has recently been declared a Natural Heritage Site. The dense reed beds of the vlei provide refuge to a variety of bird species, including the Crowned and Blue Cranes. Lakensvlei offers flyfishing for trout and, during the warmer months, for largemouth bass. At Lakensvlei, guests are able to fish both from the bank and from a boat with a specially designed high seat for easy casting. The thatched wooden chalet accommodates up to six people in two en-suite bedrooms and a loft room. For information and reservations phone (01325) 30550 or Fax (01325) 30844.

#### **UITVLUGT PONDS (18)**

Continue on past Lakensvlei to a signpost marked Uitvlugt, 22 kilometres from Dullstroom. Turn left and proceed along the dirt road for 5 kilometres to the



next signpost marked Dullstroom. Now turn right and continue on for 1 kilometre. The farm is on the left and offers trout fishing in three dams. A self-catering chalet can accommodate six guests. Phone (01325) 40342 for reservations and information.

#### COMBRINK'S (19)

Three kilometres beyond the Uitvlugt turn-off, a gravel road branches off to the right at a signpost marked Machadodorp. Five kilometres along this road is Elandskloof known more commonly as Combrink's. From Machadodorp it is 23 kilometres on the gravel road to Dullstroom. Combrink's is known for its accommodation and many dams. It offers 10 dams on the Elandskloof Spruit, 6 chalets, 7 rondavels as well as camping facilities. Combrink's is also a midway point for many other fisheries in the area. Phone (01325) 40136 for details.

#### DULLSTROOM (20)

Dullstroom is only a 30-kilometre hop from Belfast on highway R540. It lies on the upper reaches of the Crocodile River. Two stillwaters have been created by



**Welcomes**

**Day visitors to our famous Dullstroom Dam**

**Members to our wonderful club waters**

*"Quality trout fishing in a beautiful environment at realistic rates."*

**Contact : Neil Chamption - Telephone (011) 788-4571**

**PO Box 72291 Parkview 2122**



damming the river, which, at this locality, not far from its source, has fortunately escaped the punishment, that industry and agriculture have inflicted on so many of our rivers. Dullstroom Dam with an area of 14 hectares is the larger and has been a popular and productive fishery since at least the nineteen-forties. Suikerboschkop Dam, approximately 6 hectares in area is slightly further downstream and is of fairly recent origin. It is reserved for club members only. Dullstroom Flyfishers manages the dams, and in addition to stocking with rainbows has also re-introduced brown trout to these waters. The fishery is open from 06:00 to 18:00 daily. Day tickets are obtainable from the tackle shops or the Police Station. The daily cost is R40,00 per person with a limit of three fish. Float-tubes are not permitted.

Flyfishing tackle and accessories are available from Fishy Pete's Tel. (01325) 40045 and Flyfishing Adventures' Tel. (01325) 40205.

A variety of accommodation is available in Dullstroom and vicinity and camping



## FLYFISHERMAN'S PARADISE PROBABLY THE BEST TROUT WATERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



Fish for the wildest trout and you might end up with a personal trophy or even a new S.A. record Rainbow, Brown or Landlocked Salmon.

The record books tell the tale, as a new S.A./Africa record of 6,89 kg was caught by Bill Hansford-Steele on the 21st July 1997.

The services of a Flyfishing Instructor is available. Flyfishing tackle is available for hire or purchase.

SATOUR \*\*\* rated self catering chalets. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast on request.

**Contact us for further information:**  
**P O Box 880, Lydenburg, 1120 Tel: (013) 768 1347**  
**Fax: (013) 768 1055**

is permitted in the 80-hectare Dullstroom Nature Reserve which surrounds the dams. In town try the Dullstroom Inn on (01325) 40071 or Critchley Hackle which also offers dam fishing.

Continuing north towards Lydenburg the first venue is only about 2 kilometres out of town.

### **TROUT VALLEY (21)**

Cross the bridge over the Crocodile River and turn at the blue signpost which points the way to Trout Valley, about 700 metres on. The fishery features two small ponds for beginners and two larger dams approximately 1 hectare and 4 hectares respectively. Day permits cost R20,00 per rod plus R25,00 per kilogram for any fish caught. Overnight guests do not pay a rod fee. The accommodation provided is self contained and comprises two 1-bedded chalets, a 6-bedded prefabricated unit and a 6-bedded thatched cottage with its own private pond. Phone (01325) 40491 for information.

### **LYDENBURG (22)**

The 58-kilometre run from Dullstroom to Lydenburg crosses the watershed between the Crocodile and Olifants River catchment areas. About 10 kilometers north of Dullstroom the road passes Walkerson's a well-known upmarket establishment. The confluence of the two major trout streams in the area, the Dorps River and its tributary the Sterk Spruit is right in town. Lydenburg has hotel accommodation as well as a number of guesthouses in town or in the district which offer bed-and-breakfast facilities. For details phone Lydenburg Gastehuis Vereniging at (01323) 3677. The local municipality maintains a caravan park and campsite alongside the Sterkspruit.

## **COUNTRY LIFE FLYFISHING**

*Membership of this body offers Flyfishing in a variety of venues around South Africa.*

**For further details, contact Doug Starling at:**

**Tel O/H:** (013) 752 3851 or (01323) 51882

**Fax** (013) 753 3315 **Cell** 083 6266 341





### **LOCHLONG AND STREAM (23)**

A new venue being developed 3 kilometres from Lydenburg on the De Kuilen road offers both river and dam fishing. A 4-kilometre stretch of the Sterk Spruit, below the dam wall has been divided into two sections to give anglers a choice of easier or more difficult fishing. The 25-hectare P. T. C. du Plessis Dam, renamed Lochlong, may be fished from the banks or from boats or float-tubes.

Accommodation, while still under construction at the time of writing, will be available on a self-catering basis. The venue is being developed and advertised as a shareblock scheme and does, therefore, not offer unrestricted access to the public. However, the developer, Doug Starling, has given FOSAF the following written statement: "Lochlong and Stream is a shareblock, which consists of a number of owners whose cottages have allocated fishing beats on the river and loch. These owners are not always in residence and some do let out their houses, together with their fishing beats, on a daily or weekly basis." For further details telephone or fax (013) 235-1882.

To the north, Rivendell and Highland Run are still in the general proximity of Lydenburg and worth considering. Both lie in the valley of the Spekboom River, which was one of the earlier rivers to be stocked after trout first came to the area. The turn-off is approximately 8 kilometres from Lydenburg on the R36 at a signpost marked Finsbury. From here turn eastwards onto a gravel road that soon enters attractively wild and rugged country.

### **RIVENDELL (24)**

The turn-off to this farm is approximately 11 kilometres along the gravel road. The owner, Gerhard du Toit, is a trout farmer, flyfisherman and a regular writer on flyfishing matters. The river is stocked with trout from his own rearing ponds and can be fished over a distance of 5 kilometres. As it is a small and clear mountain stream the trout take dry flies readily. Visitors can also partake in clay pigeon shooting and bird watching. Self-catering accommodation is available. For further information phone (01323) 4014 or 3966.

### **HIGHLAND RUN (25)**

This stretch of the Spekboom River is about 7 kilometres upstream of Rivendell. The owner, Doug Starling, has increased the amount of holding water substantially by constructing a series of low packed-stone weirs over a distance of

about 5 kilometres. The river has a profusion of naturalized trout that are self sustaining and, apparently, no stocking is necessary. Rainbows predominate but there are also some brown trout. The natural food supply in the river is augmented by judicious feeding with floating pellets thereby greatly increasing the carrying capacity of the stream and enabling the fish to grow to prodigious proportions. Accommodation is available in two fishing lodges, which sleep eight guests apiece. Although Highland Run is open to the public, its members enjoy preferential booking and open slots are few and far between. For further information phone (013) 235-1882 or 083 626 6341.

**TROUT HIDEAWAY (26)**

This well-known and highly productive stillwater fishery is off the beaten track. Still on the R36, keep heading north from Lydenburg for 29 kilometres and turn right on the R533 to Pilgrim's Rest. Continue up Robber's Pass for 14 kilometres and turn right onto a dirt road that winds through exotic plantations for a further 14 kilometres. The condition of this road varies from fair to poor and requires careful driving especially in rainy weather. Five dams ranging in size from 0.5 hectare to 5 hectares have been constructed in the main valley and its tributaries and, for the stream fisherman, there are three weirs above and three below the stillwater complex. The waters have been stocked with rainbow and brown trout. Trout Hideaway has a tradition of good fishing and over the years some really enormous trout have been captured here. In fact, at the time of writing, Bill Hansford-Steele took a 6,89 kilogram rainbow, his second double-digit (in pounds) fish in seven years at this venue. The dams and feeder streams have a varied population of aquatic creatures for the trout to feed on but supplemental feeding is undertaken in order to ensure rapid growth and to maintain the high average weight of fish in these waters. It is essentially a catch-and-release fishery but should an angler decide to keep any fish then they are charged for by weight. Float tubes are permitted.

Five luxury chalets offer accommodation for twenty-four people. For full details and reservations phone (013) 768 1347 or fax (013) 768 1055.

**VALLEY OF THE RAINBOW (24)**

This venue, on the west slope of the Steenkampsberg, lies in the Steelpoort River catchment and is on the western fringe of the traditional trout country. The most direct access route is highway 555 from Middelburg to Burgersfort. About 8



kilometres past Stoffberg turn right onto the gravel road to Dullstroom. The turn is well marked and is next to the Laersdrif Police Station. Follow the road for 8,5 kilometres to the signpost indicating the turn-off to Valley of the Rainbow on the right. Fishing is available in 3 dams and visitors have a choice of accommodation in a self-catering tented camp or in the guesthouse which offers fully catered accommodation in five suites. For information phone (013) 271-0053.



## **NEW ANTI-STRESS DEVICE**

**BANG  
HEAD  
HERE!**

### **DIRECTIONS**

- Fix to firm surface e.g. a wall
- Place forehead on splotch
- Bang head repeatedly until de-stressed or unconscious
- Repeat as necessary

**OR.....GO**

**FLYFISHING IN SWAZILAND WITH THE  
FLYFISHERS.**

**Tel, (+268) 43118 / 41876 FAX 44751**



By Les Deakin



THE USUTU FORESTS FLY-FISHING CLUB controls ten stillwaters in the Usutu Forests along the western escarpment of Swaziland (**1, Figure 17**). Waters vary in size from about 1 hectare to 8 hectares and are spaced roughly 30 kilometres apart. Fishing is very challenging in some of the dams owing to the topography as well as the forest reaching down to the water's edge in places. Weather is generally excellent but summer storms are apt to blow up suddenly. The club is very active with eighty members at present and stocking of the waters is carried out on a regular basis throughout the year. During winter months six of the dams are closed to members and the public because of the risk of forest fires but the remaining four provide excellent sport. The closed period starts at the end of June and lasts until the first 75 millimetres of rain has fallen over a two-day period, usually about late September to early October.

Customarily rainbow trout are stocked but the club is now considering stocking some brown trout as well. Bass are present in several dams but at this stage have not become a nuisance. In two of the dams the bass populations are large enough to allow the use of spinners. In the remaining eight dams only flyfishing is permitted. All dams may be waded and on the larger ones float-tubes may be used. A small forest stream was stocked during the past season but it will remain closed for at least another year while the progress of the trout is being monitored.

Members of the public can gain access to the dams by paying a daily rod fee and obtaining a forest permit card from either one of the two fishing tackle shops in Mbabane, or from the Forest Research Office during normal working hours. Winter fishing permits are obtainable from the same sources but must be booked on the Wednesday prior to the intended weekend. Should there be a red-alert fire warning owing to high winds or other factors, permits may be cancelled for safety reasons. The daily bag limit is two fish per angler.

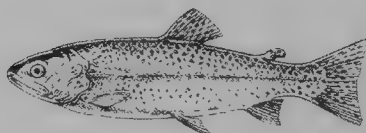
#### INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

Visitors should call the following shops or persons at the telephone numbers



indicated for information: Flyfishers, for day permits and maps, (09268) 43118 or 41876; Les Deakin, (09268) 43118 or 41876 (o/h) or 61099 (a/h); Arnulf Kranzler, (09268) 74234 (o/h) or 74347 (a/h).

Accommodation is available at the following establishments: Foresters Arms Hotel, close to fishing, (09268) 26084, 74177 or 74377; Meikles Mount; self-catering, close to fishing, (09268) 74110; Royal Swazi Sun Hotel, (09268) 61001; Lugogo Sun Hotel, (09268) 61101; Ezulwini Sun Hotel, (09268) 61201; Timbali Caravan Park, rooms and camping, (09268) 61156.



# LAXTON'S

*SPECIALISTS IN FLY-FISHING EQUIPMENT*



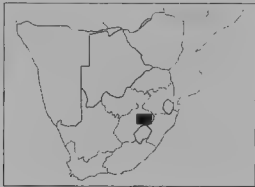
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By Dennis de Klerk



**P**UBLIC TROUT FISHING IN THE FREE STATE is confined to the highlands in the northeastern corner of the Province and specifically the Swartwater (Metsimatsho), Fika Patso, and the Sterkfontein Dams as well as streams and dams in and around Clarens (**Figure 4**). Trout were introduced in this area in the late forties when the club in Harrismith stocked many of the local streams with both rainbow trout and brown trout. The fingerlings were hatched and reared in a reservoir belonging to the Nestlé factory in Harrismith and are the forebears of the trout in Fika Patso and Swartwater Dams. Subsequent stocking of fish in these impoundments as well as in Sterkfontein Dam has obviously taken place and all are well known for their large fish. Two brown trout of 5,65 and 5,51 kilograms were captured in 1951 and generated much interest in South Africa and abroad. At present the Free State Nature Conservation Department controls the fishing and takes care of the stocking in the three reservoirs. Anglers must be in possession of a valid Free

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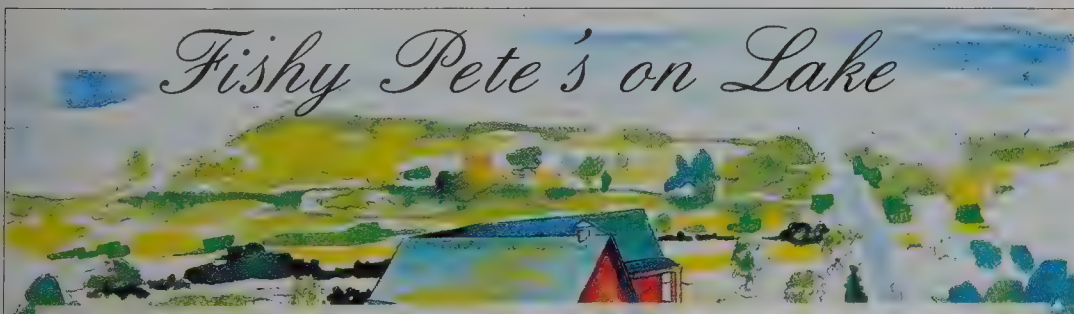
State fishing licence, which is obtainable from Magistrate's Offices in the province.

The Harrismith region is very scenic and the high rainfall gives rise to lush green veld and to patches of indigenous forest locally. Summers are mild to warm and the winters very cold with snow often falling in the higher areas. The three State dams are all easily reached via the R712 from either Kestell or Harrismith. The R711 from Bethlehem and Qwa Qwa provides access to the privately owned waters of the Clarens area.

#### FIKA PATSO DAM (1)

This 50-hectare reservoir is in Qwa Qwa approximately 65 kilometres from Harrismith. Follow the R712 to Phuthaditjhaba and then head due south on the dirt road for roughly 5 kilometres to the dam. Fishing Fika Patso without a float-tube or kick-boat requires quite a long walk to the inlets where the sides are not so sheer and there is room for a backcast. The inlets are more productive than the relatively sterile steep slopes at and adjacent to the dam wall. Large Walker's Killers and Woolly

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Worm-type flies are effective when probing the depths whereas nymphs and small dries do well in the shallows most of the year. As the wind can be a factor rods that handle 6- to 7-weight lines are sometimes needed. Smallmouth yellowfish (*Barbus aeneus*) are also caught in this dam. Pilfering and theft can be a problem at Fika Patso and Swartwater Dams, so conceal and lock up your belongings in your car. The nearest accommodation is 10 kilometres away at the Witsieshoek Mountain Resort that perches on the edge of the Drakensberg overlooking Royal Natal National Park. Phone (05871) 36361 for reservations.

#### **SWARTWATER (METSHIMATSHO) DAM (2)**

The route is the same as for Fika Patso but from Phuthaditjhaba turn southeast onto a gravel road and continue for approximately 12 kilometres to the dam. Swartwater has an area of 75 hectares when full. The shallows are within easy walking distance and are, as usual, the more productive areas. Rainbow trout in the 3- to 4-kilogram range have come from this water as well as the rare fish of 5 kilograms. Green damselfly and dragonfly imitations, nymphs, bead-head flies and Walker's Killers fished in and around the weedbeds and in the inlets can produce from August to May. Both this dam and the previous one

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FIGURE 4: YELLOWFISH AND TROUT FISHING VENUES IN THE FREE STATE



have mountainous catchment areas that are often snow-covered in winter and their feeder streams support little, if any, natural breeding. There are no facilities and the nearest accommodation is at the Witsieshoek Mountain Resort, 20 kilometres distant.

### **STERKFORTEIN DAM (3)**

This 6940-hectare impoundment on the Nuwejaarspruit is part of the Tugela – Vaal Scheme and is essentially a water storage reservoir for Gauteng. The natural catchment area is only 193 square kilometres and virtually the entire supply of water in Sterkfontein is pumped from the Tugela River over the lower Drakensberg Escarpment into Driekloof Dam, which acts as a silt trap. From Driekloof the water flows over a spillway into Sterkfontein and from there via the Nuwejaar Spruit and the Wilge River into the Vaal Dam. The varying demand for water from Sterkfontein results in a rather drastic fluctuation of its level that adversely affects fish and fishing. Sterkfontein is not an important rainbow trout fishery. Other species such as smallmouth yellowfish (*Barbus aeneus*), catfish or barbel (*Clarias gariepinus*), carp, and more rarely, largemouth yellowfish (*B. kimberleyensis*) dominate the catch. A study conducted in 1984/85, not long after the first stocking of trout, showed the fish population to be made up of smallmouth yellowfish (31%), rainbow trout (14%), mudfish (*Labeo capensis*, 27%), moggel (*L. umbratus*, 20%) and catfish (8%). The notable absence of carp either indicates their failure to turn up in gill nets or later introduction. Unless augmented by stocking the rainbow trout population will continue to decline. Most anglers fish from the side but boating is permitted. Heed the weather and take great care when out on the water as the dam is subject to sudden and violent storms at times.

Sterkfontein lies within an 18 000-hectare nature reserve and is a short hop from Harrismith on the R712. The Free State Nature Conservation Department maintains seventeen self-catering chalets, three hundred and fifty camping and caravan sites and excellent ablution facilities. The entry fee is R15,00 and Free State angling licences are also obtainable at the gate at a cost of R10,00. The reserve is very popular and chalets must be booked well in advance. Call (05861)-23520 for information and reservations.

### **BOKPOORT HOLIDAY AND GAME RANCH (4)**

The turn-off to Bokpoort is 5 kilometres from Clarens on the Golden Gate

road and it is clearly marked. Follow the dirt road up the hill for a further 4 kilometres to reach the resort. The four dams and section of stream on the property provide excellent fishing for rainbow trout which are charged for at the rate of R30,00 per rod and R20,00 per fish. Bokpoort is also renowned for its scenic horse trails. Accommodation ranges from tent sites to rustic partially catered chalets. The restaurant has a reputation for excellent traditional cooking. Phone (058) 256-1181 for reservations and information.

**SEDIBA LODGE (5)**

This establishment is 10 kilometres south of Clarens on the Fouriesburg road. From the turn-off, which is clearly marked, follow the dirt road for approximately 1 kilometre to the lodges. Sediba offers rainbow trout fishing in a 2,5-hectare lake. The owners encourage catch-and-release with barbless hooks but if trout are to be kept, they are charged for at R25,00 per kilogram. Two luxurious self-catering fully serviced lodges, sleeping four and six respectively, overlook the lake. For reservations and details call (058) 256-1559.

**MALUTI MOUNTAIN LODGE (6)**

This lodge is 5 kilometres north of Clarens on the Bethlehem road. It does not have any fishing on the property but has access to a trout dam nearby. Maluti Mountain Lodge has four luxury family chalets and 10 doubles as well as a superb fisherman's pub. The owner, Archer Brownlee, is the chairman of the Clarens Flyfishing Club and he is an invaluable source of information on fishing and other matters in the Clarens area. Contact him on (058) 256-1422 for details.

**FACILITIES AND INFORMATION**

For information on fishing conditions and guiding services in the region call Dennis de Klerk on cellphone number 083 227 6328.









FLYFISHING OPPORTUNITIES IN THIS REGION (**Figure 5**) are very much on the increase as more and more landowners realise that they hold the key to the pleasure of many newcomers to flyfishing. Not only that, but there's added revenue to be made from the waters they own. Some offer day-ticket fishing on their dams; some offer holiday cottages with fishing thrown in; others again only offer day-ticket fishing when their cottages are not booked. Many are new to the practice of renting out their fishing; they're feeling their way in this new venture. For this reason it would be unreasonable in this chapter to quote day-ticket rates and/or accommodation charges as these are liable to change with circumstances. Prices can drop or increase with fluctuations in the quality of a fishery; likewise seasonal variations in accessibility can play a role.

This listing of venues will, therefore, contain essentially contact names and telephone numbers. Any further information provided will be of the sort that is unlikely to change. For instance, I will tell you that there are two large dams on a given property but will not tell you that there's a bull in the parking area or that you can expect to catch more browns than rainbows. Nor can I tell you what average size the trout will be. What I can say is that all these dams are situated in areas where excellent trout growth is common, and where most dams have yielded fish well in excess of two kilograms. The largest trout have been double this size and, more rarely, have reached 4,5 kilos, the magical double-digit mark if you weigh your fish in pounds. Most importantly, the enthusiasm with which Natal farmers (especially their wives!) are tackling this totally new ball game augurs extremely well for the future. Stocking is being carried out at an accelerated pace; fishery banks and access roads are being improved; cottages are being renovated and brochures are going to print for distribution through fly shops and tourism offices. Day ticket rates are likely to increase in the months and years to come, but they will, in the main, be a reflection of the improved quality of our fishing. God forbid that any so-called flyfishers discourage the farmers by exceeding their limits or leaving rubbish lying



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around. Some of the waters described in this book are being opened to the public in the belief that today's flyfisherfolk have improved ethics and a true love and understanding of nature. It is up to all of us to prove the farmers right.

The Natal Parks Board has, of course, for many decades, maintained a string of nature reserves offering flyfishing in this northern sector of the Drakensberg Park.

#### **ROYAL NATAL NATIONAL PARK (7, FIGURE 4)**

The park is situated about 46 kilometres west of Bergville and is reached via a tarred road. It shares a common boundary with the Rugged Glen Nature Reserve. The most imposing feature is the awe-inspiring Amphitheatre bordered by a towering wall of basaltic lava. Two dams are available for fishing – the scenic 2-hectare RNNP Dam opposite the visitor centre and the 1-hectare Rugged Glen Dam several kilometres away. Both dams are restocked on a monthly basis with fish transported from Kamberg. No boats or float-tubes are allowed on the dams. The Mahai River, a tributary of the Tugela, provides stream fishing and some good trout are taken when conditions are favourable. Day permits, for dam and river, cost R25,00 per person. The daily bag limit is 3 fish of not less than 200 millimetres per angler.

Accommodation is available at the Tendele Huttet Camp, Royal Natal National Park Hotel and Royal Natal National Park Campsite. Details on interesting walks and climbs can be obtained from the Visitor Centre. A large and pleasant picnic site in the vicinity of the dam and the Mahai provides braai facilities for day visitors. For general enquiries and campsite bookings phone (036) 438-6303.

#### **CATHEDRAL PEAK TO CHAMPAGNE CASTLE (1)**

About 30 kilometres southeast of Royal Natal, and easily accessed from Winterton is an area of exceptional mountain scenery which extends from Cathedral Peak to Champagne Castle, two of the highest peaks in the Drakensberg. It encompasses the catchments of the Mlambonjwa River and the Sterk Spruit for which the Champagne Castle - Cathedral Peak spur forms the divide. The well-known Cathedral Peak Hotel is situated far up in the Mlambonjwa Valley, a mere 6 kilometres from the great jagged buttress extending out from the main escarpment to Cathedral Peak and continuing on to Amphlett Peak. The hotel has its own private trout hatchery. The Mlambonjwa traverses forestry ground but is under control of the NPB which has an office on site where day permits to fish the river may be



purchased at R10,00 per angler. Call the Officer-in-Charge on (036) 488-1880 for information.

The adjoining Sterk Spruit Valley is probably the most popular tourist playground area in the Berg and is well provided with hotels and other accommodation. The NPB maintains an office and a public campground near or at the former Monk's Cowl Forestry Station. Fishing in the Sterk Spruit, which joins the Njasuti near Winterton, is poor but at least one of the hotels, the Drakensberg Sun offers dam fishing to residents.

### **INJASUTI (2)**

The next valley is that of the Njasuti River. The hutted camp lies far up the road near the headwaters, in the northern part of the Giant's Castle Game Reserve. It is reached via Loskop from either Winterton or Estcourt. The scenery is outstanding and the beautiful valley is watched over by Cathkin Peak, Monk's Cowl and Champagne Castle. Trout fishing is available for several kilometres along the Njasuti. The area is also popular with hikers and several caves provide ideal overnight stops. Self-catering accommodation is available in sixteen fully equipped self-contained 2-bedroomed units and also in two 8-bedded dormitories. A camping ground with hot- and cold-water ablution facilities has been established and can accommodate up to one hundred people. Phone (036) 488-1050 for camp, caravan and cave reservations and fishing permits.

### **GIANTS CASTLE GAME RESERVE (3)**

Although the direct distance between Injasuti and Giant's Castle is less than 20 kilometres, the road distance is about four times as much. Travellers following the N3 from the north should proceed via Estcourt and those from the south via the town of Mooi River. The reserve straddles the grassy hills and deep valleys of the Little Berg below the sheer basaltic crags of the main Drakensberg Range. The pretty hutted camp nestles unobtrusively among indigenous trees and overlooks the Bushman's River, which can be fished for several kilometres within the reserve. The Bushman's is, of course, one of the three Natal rivers that were first stocked with brown trout in 1890. Now after 108 years the progeny of that original batch of 500 fry are still providing anglers with lively sport. Lower down, where it flows through private land, the river is still considered to be one of the two best brown trout

streams in KwaZulu - Natal, the other being the Mooi. The camp accommodates sixty-eight visitors in bungalows and self-contained cottages. A luxurious lodge sleeping seven is also available. Three mountain huts have been erected along the 2200 metre contour path for the benefit of hikers. Many visitors consider Giant's Castle to be the most appealing of the Drakensberg reserves and consequently it is in high demand. It is always necessary to book well in advance to obtain accommodation. For general camp matters and fishing phone (0363) 24718.

**FOREST LODGE (4)**

When driving from Giant's Castle to Kamberg, you see on your right a very large 70-hectare dam. This is Forest Lodge Dam, at the source of the Hlatikulu River, and it offers outstanding year-round fishing either from the bank or from float-tubes or kick-boats. As a result of abuse by flyfishermen, day-ticket fishing is no longer available on this prime water. Fishing is available only to visitors occupying the rustic fishermen's cottage. The cottage in question, which is situated right on the water's edge, has been newly renovated and electrified. Sleeping accommodation for two and three respectively is provided in two rooms in the upstairs section. The lounge, dining and kitchen area offers an open fireplace and panoramic windows opening onto the lake. Forest Lodge can also be reached from Mooi River by following the tarred road to Giant's Castle to the T-junction, about 32 kilometres out. The entrance is about 2 kilometres to the left on the Kamberg road. For full information, directions and bookings, contact Danie or Lisa Steyn on (0333) 32435.

**TIERHOEK TROUT (5)**

From the T-junction mentioned in the previous section, continue for 4 kilometres south, turn right and continue up the dirt road for about 5 kilometres. Tierhoek farm offers day-ticket flyfishing throughout the year. Fishing is on a number of regularly stocked and impeccably maintained trout dams. For those who require it, self-catering accommodation is also available. For information, contact the owners, Tom and Annie Theron on (0333) 32439.

South of the Bushman's the first two rivers of interest to the flyfisher are the Little Mooi and the Mooi.

**HIGHMOOR DAMS (6)**

The Little Mooi River rises in the high wetlands of the Highmoor State





Forest, a proclaimed wilderness area. To reach it proceed along the Rosetta - Kamberg road for 31 kilometres to the Kamberg turn-off and then follow the Highmoor signposts up the valley. The two dams on the Little Mooi at Highmoor lie at an altitude of 2000 metres and the fishing is rated amongst the best in Natal, even comparable to some of the more exclusive and highly productive syndicate waters. The Natal Parks Board limits the amount of fishing to a maximum of 500 rod-days per year and does not grant access to more than six anglers daily. Because of the demand it is not easy to gain access at short notice, so advance booking is advisable, if not essential. Float-tubing is permitted but, owing to the environmental sensitivity of the area, no cars may proceed beyond the campsite area and anglers need to carry their equipment to the dams for approximately 2 kilometres. The fishing season is closed from 1st June to 31st October each year. The latter date is somewhat flexible as it is determined by the breeding progress of the endangered wattled cranes which nest in the area. A second closure commences on 16th January and lasts until the end of February. It is, perhaps, advisable to phone beforehand and confirm the dates mentioned above. The cost of a day permit is R50 and the bag limit, two fish per angler per day with a minimum size of 350 millimetres. The only accommodation available is an essentially unimproved campsite rather euphemistically referred to as "rustic". To book fishing and camping, and for information phone (0333) 37240.

#### **DONDINI (7)**

Heading back down the valley from Highmoor for about 5 kilometres, look for an open gateway and the Dondini signpost on the left. Travelling in the other direction it is 5,5 kilometres from the Highmoor turn-off. Dondini offers fishing in two dams, as well as on other large dams in the vicinity, to residents of the self-catering cottage, which can accommodate six in three bedrooms. For reservations and information contact Mike or Pam Poplett on Tel/Fax (0333) 37108.

#### **GLENGARRY PARK (8)**

Glengarry is a few kilometres down the valley from Dondini and less than a kilometre from the Highmoor turn-off. It has always been a convenient base from which to explore the surrounding countryside. It is 30 kilometres west of Rosetta, 11 kilometres from either Kamberg or Highmoor and within easy driving distance of the Mooi and Bushman's Rivers. On the property itself, anglers can choose between

3 dams or opt for a 2-kilometre stretch of the Little Mooi. For the golfer there is a nine-hole course. In addition to the ten reasonably priced self-catering chalets there are also camping and caravan sites with power hook-ups. For full details phone the Sivewrights at (0333) 37225.

**KAMBERG NATURE RESERVE (9)**

The Reserve straddles the upper Mooi River and is the Parks Board's most popular flyfishing venue. The first successful stocking of trout in the Mooi took place in 1899 on the farm Game Pass, immediately to the north. Kamberg is situated about 42 kilometres from Rosetta. It comprises two portions joined by a narrow corridor in the south. A salient of privately owned land juts southward into the central part of the Reserve. The upper portion houses the ranger's house, camp buildings and the hatchery, whereas the lower portion, known as Stillerust, has only the old farm homestead on it. The total length of river available to visitors on the two portions is approximately 13 kilometres. Kamberg also has six dams ranging in size from 0,3 to 3,5 hectares. Boats or float-tubes are not allowed on the dams. The cost of a day permit is R25 per angler. The daily bag limit is 3 fish of any size per angler on the dams and 7 on the river. Nature lovers will find much to do and see at Kamberg. There are several walks plus a self-guided trail suitable for paraplegics. Visitors can expect to see reedbuck, mountain reedbuck, blesbok, black wildebeest, grey rhebuck, eland, grey duiker and oribi. A trout hatchery and a trout information centre are popular visitor attractions. Accommodation is provided in a pleasant camp comprising five rest huts, a 6-bedded cottage (with cook), a 5-bedded "fisherman" chalet, and a communal lounge as well as ablution and kitchen blocks. Visitors must bring their own food and drink. Rustic accommodation for ten guests is available in the farmhouse on Stillerust. Contact numbers: Camp office; (0333) 37251, trout hatchery; (0333) 37250

**RIVERSIDE (10)**

The 5-kilometre section of the Mooi River, between the two portions of Kamberg, is on privately owned land but it is open to the public. From Rosetta, follow the road to Kamberg but turn right onto the farm road about 600 metres short of the bridge over the Mooi. In addition to stream fishing, Riverside also has four dams ranging from 0,5 to 5 hectares in size. Accommodation is in two self-catering



thatched cottages sleeping seven in the large cottage and five in the smaller one. For information and bookings phone (0333) 37245.

Immediately beyond the southern boundary of Stillerust, the Mooi River plunges over a 10-metre waterfall and then continues through private land for approximately 4 kilometres before reaching the next stretch of public-accessible water.

#### **TROUT BUNGALOW (11)**

The turn-off to this historic section of the Mooi River is 22 kilometres from Nottingham Road on the Loteni - Sani Pass road. Visitors have access to a 10-kilometre stretch of river, which has always been highly acclaimed by flyfishermen. The water has been in private hands since 1936 but in 1992 the current owners reopened it to the public. Trout Bungalow can cater for 14 guests on a full-board basis and has long held a reputation for superb accommodation and cuisine. Only guests may fish the river. For information and reservations phone (031) 29-9567 or (0333) 36417.

#### **THE BEND COUNTRY HOUSE (12)**

This is the next venue downstream from the Trout Bungalow water. It is almost completely enfolded in a large meander of the Mooi River, hence the name. The turn-off to The Bend is 12,5 kilometres from Nottingham Road Police Station on the Loteni - Sani Pass road. At this point turn right onto district road D361 and continue for a further 6 kilometres. Visitors may fish both riverbanks for a distance of 5 kilometres as well as two dams. Accommodation, dinner and breakfast are provided in seven double en-suite bedrooms in the main house. Two self-catering cottages are also available. The one sleeps six and the other two. Fishing is for overnight guests only. For bookings or more details phone (0333) 36441.

#### **TROUT BEND (13)**

This venue on the Mooi River is a short distance below the previous one. Follow the same route but after turning onto D361, take the second turn-off to the right, continue to the river and cross the causeway. Fishing is permitted from the left bank over a distance of about 1 kilometre. Day tickets are available for no more than two rods. Fishing on weekends has usually been booked for the entire season but prospective visitors can phone on Thursdays to find out whether there have been any



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cancellations. Two cottages, sleeping four and eight respectively, are available. For information phone (0333) 36390 during office hours or (0333) 36504 after hours.

**BALLINA FARM (14)**

This is the lowermost section of scheduled trout water on the Mooi River and lies immediately upstream of Inchbrakie Falls. The farm is under new ownership. The turn-off to Ballina is 11 kilometres from Rosetta on the Kamberg-Giant's Castle road. The left bank of the Mooi can be fished for 2,5 kilometres. In addition there are twelve dams, ranging from 0,5 to 6 hectares in area, which the owners intend restocking fully before the spring of 1997. Accommodation is no longer available but day-tickets may be obtained. Phone Janet Wearing at (0333) 37211 for information.

**NATAL MIDLANDS TROUT SYNDICATE (15)**

Until such time as all share blocks on this interesting water at Rosetta are sold out, casual fishing will remain available to non-members, either on a day-visit basis,

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an overnight basis or a weekly basis. The property is situated 1 kilometre south of Rosetta on the R103. Fishing is in several well-stocked dams that have a strong perennial stream feeding them. This results in natural spawning and strong healthy fish with a longer lifespan. The stream itself is hardly fishable but there are plans to build weirs on it in the near future. Two lodges can accommodate up to six persons each. For reservations call James Berning on (0333) 37031 or Doug Barrett on (0333) 37166.

**HIGHLANDS ESTATES (16)**

The farm is situated 10 kilometres north of Mooi River on the R103. It offers fishing on a 7-hectare well-established dam which has been recently opened to the public. It is fishable either from the banks or from boats or float-tubes. At the time I first visited the dam, casting jetties were being built out onto the water. There is a thatched cottage, which sleeps four. In a pinch a rondavel for two can also be made available. The owners are Rocky and Cathy Rich and they can be contacted on the following numbers: (0333) 32006, (0333) 32524 or 082:573-4350.

**BELLWOOD COTTAGES (17)**

This venue is only two kilometres out of Nottingham Road, on the Fort Nottingham road. Two self-catering cottages are provided. The larger one will sleep six to eight persons, whereas the smaller one, the Honeymooner, will sleep (you guessed it) two. All modern facilities, including TV, electric blankets and a microwave oven are provided. Fishing in two dams of 6 and 2 hectares respectively is reserved for occupants of the cottages. Full information from the owners, Jeannine and Willie Messenger, on tel./fax (0333) 363218.

**PETER BREWITT'S DAMS (18)**

Take the Mount West/Nottingham Road exit on the N3 and turn to the east. After about 500 metres turn left at a signpost marked Mount West. Follow the dirt road for about 6 kilometres then turn right onto district road D153 and continue on for a further 10 kilometres to get to this well-known Natal water which offers day-fishing on two good dams. The top dam covers 7 hectares and the bottom one 2 hectares. Depending on weather conditions, the bottom dam is not always accessible to passenger cars. Accommodation is available right next door in Martin Butland's Cottage, which sleeps four in two bedrooms with living/dining area, kitchen,



bathroom and electricity. Bookings through either Peter Brewitt on (0333) 36325 or Johnny Brewitt on (0333) 36222.

#### **SPRINGHOLM (19)**

To reach Springholm exit from the N3 as for the previous venue but follow instead the road to Curry's Post for 4,5 kilometres. Springholm offers fishing in two very productive dams that have yielded fish in excess of 4.5 kilos. Fishing can be done from the banks as well as from float-tubes or kick-boats. Not more than four fishermen per dam are permitted. Day-tickets are available but houseguests take precedence over day fishermen. Country-style bed and breakfast accommodation and dinner (optional) is provided in a wing of the main house which features one double-bedded en-suite room and two twin-bedded rooms with a shared bathroom. Other activities include golf on a nearby course, billiards and birding. For full information phone the Jonssons on (0333) 36342 or fax them on (0333) 36074.

#### **NYAMVUBU COTTAGE (20)**

Follow the R622 from Mooi River to Grey Town for 30 kilometres and turn south on district road D532. Continue on for 300 metres and check in at the office, No. 904. Thereafter proceed along D532 for 4 kilometres, turn left at the sign and continue for another kilometre to the river crossing. Turn left immediately beyond to the cottage that overlooks a 30-hectare dam and three smaller ones. A small river, which can also be fished, runs through the large dam ensuring the survival of a population of brown trout established here in the early 1900's. Rainbow trout are also stocked in the dams on a regular basis. Nyamvubu offers day-ticket fishing or fishing with accommodation in the self-contained cottage, which is of open plan construction and can sleep up to eight persons in two bedrooms upstairs and one downstairs. Full details available from Alan Rowe on Tel./Fax (0333) 32087.

#### **GILBOA DAM (21)**

This is a very productive dam situated on Mondi property immediately east of Nyamvuba in the Karkloof Mountains. It is accessible from Mooi River, Greytown or Howick. Accommodation can be booked in the cottage overlooking the dam but fishing is also available to day-ticket holders. For bookings and directions on best access routes phone (033) 502-9043.



**LYTHWOOD LODGE (22)**

Situated on the Lions River in the Lidgetton area a mere 8 kilometres off the N3 highway, this is a luxury lodge featuring seven en-suite double rooms, with conference facilities for up to twenty persons. Fishing is available on several kilometres of the Lions River as well as two dams. Full details available from Michael and Ann Peacock, Tel. (033) 234-4519 or (033) 234-4666, Fax. (033) 234-4668.

**MEADOW FARM (23)**

Meadow Farm is a short distance south of the Everglades Hotel in the trout-rich Dargle area. It is accessible either via the Dargle Valley road or along a more southerly route through Boston. It has a well-stocked dam of 2 hectares. Flyfishing is restricted to residents of its luxurious 2-sleeper cottage, which includes satellite TV for rainy days. Honeymooning flyfishers could not dream of a better venue. Full details are available from Roger Collins on (033) 234-4246.

**WATERSONG (24, also 20 FIG. 6)**

This property, on the headwaters of the Nzinga River, borders the Mkhomazi Wilderness Area about 35 kilometres southwest of Nottingham Road. To reach it, follow the road to Himeville from Nottingham Road and continue for about 9 kilometres past the Kamberg turn-off. Watersong offers day-ticket fishing as well as accommodation in two Eskom-powered self-catering cottages. The 3-roomed cottage sleeps four whereas the 4-roomed cottage sleeps four to six persons. On site fishing is in five regularly stocked dams covering a total of 4 hectares. More serious anglers will want to book a day or two on the 29-hectare Mount Lesueur (better known as George Lorenz's Dam) which is a short distance away and has produced "double-digit" fish. For information and bookings on all dams phone Malcolm Berry on (0333) 36812.

**STONEYRIDGE**

Tucked away in the Thukela Biosphere Reserve in riverine forest on the Bloukrans River, only 21 kilometres from Colenso, Stoneyridge offers a different type of outdoor experience. To reach the property, follow the R74 from Colenso to Weenen and turn left after 15 kilometres at the Stoneyridge signpost. Continue along the dirt road for a further 6 kilometres to the Phumula Bush Camp. In this put-and-take fishery, the river is stocked with large trout each autumn. It is fishable only

during the winter, from April to September, when the water is cold enough for trout to survive. Accommodation is in a luxurious tented camp with log fires in the evening and top-class Bushveld cuisine. Many other activities are on tap. Phone John or Susan Rich on (0363) 41674 for full information.

**BALELE MOUNTAIN LODGE (2, FIGURE 17)**

Situated in the Utrecht area of northern Natal, in the Balele Mountains, the lodge offers day-ticket fishing as well as fishing with accommodation. To reach it proceed to the turn-off of district road D154, about 4 kilometres south of Groenvlei on the Wakkerstroom – Utrecht road. Continue along D154 for a further 4 kilometres. The lodge has its own hatchery from which seven dams, with a total surface area of about 100 hectares, are stocked. The largest dam is approximately 50 hectares. Accommodation is in five self-catering chalets (one of which sleeps eight, the others four each) all equipped with log fireplaces. There is also a caravan park, horse riding and 4 x 4 country to be explored. Full information and bookings from Margie or Coenie Dowling on (017) 730-0417.

**WATERLOO FARM (3, FIGURE 17)**

The farm lies at an altitude of 1700 metres in the southern Balele Mountain Range. It is 11 kilometres from Utrecht via Knights Hill Pass on the Paulpietersburg road. Three spring-fed dams, ranging from 0,3 to 2 hectares in size, are stocked with rainbow and brown trout. Unspoiled stream fishing is available 20 kilometres away along a beautiful 12-kilometre stretch of the Bivane River on Mondi property. Accommodation is in two fully equipped, traditional-style stone cottages, each sleeping five and overlooking a beautiful valley in which the dams are situated. A garden cottage, adjacent to the homestead, sleeps two. Full information from Una and Neil Stannard on (034) 331-4440.





TRAVELLER CRUISING THE N3 HIGHWAY as it dissects the rolling hills of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, might see on a clear day, far off to the west, the distant snow-capped peaks of the Drakensberg. But when the air is hazy, the majestic basalt buttresses are hidden from the eyes of the throngs which daily ply the six-lane asphalt highway.

High in these oft-shrouded mountains, where the air is crisp and clear, rise streams, which tumble through untamed wilderness tracts and hidden valleys, before merging into stately rivers that wind through verdant pasture and sombre plantations. And the foothills all around are bejeweled with countless lakes and dams. Into this landscape of towering peaks and tumbling rivers, are set the twin villages of Underberg and Himeville; long favoured as a prime destination by wielders of the “long rod”, for they lie at the heartland of a trout fishing mecca that extends from the Lotheni River in the northeast, right through to Matatiele and Kokstad in the southwest (**Figure 6**). The KwaZulu-Natal Southern Drakensberg affords more flyfishing opportunities than any other district in South Africa. For here flow the lyric Mzimkhulu, Pholela and Mkomazi, the Ngwangwane and Ndawana, the Mzimkhulwana and Mkhomazana to mention but a few. It is here, in the shadow of Masubasuba and of Sani Pass, of Rhino Peak and Bushman’s Nek that fabled waters abound. This is the district where, from rivers, wild-spawned fish of almost 4 kilograms are taken and from the dams come fish of 4.5 kilograms and more - the legendary 10-pounders. These are the home waters of the Underberg-Himeville Trout Fishing Club. Formed in 1954 by landowners to provide public access to quality flyfishing. The club, with 1 000 members, has grown to become one of the largest flyfishing clubs in the country. Today it holds the fishing rights to more than 160 kilometres of river, as well as 54 dams with a surface area of more than 400 hectares.

For many years the excellence of these waters in the Southern Drakensberg was a closely guarded secret, but recent seasons have seen steadily increasing streams of visiting flyrodders in search of trophy trout, for nowhere else in South Africa are



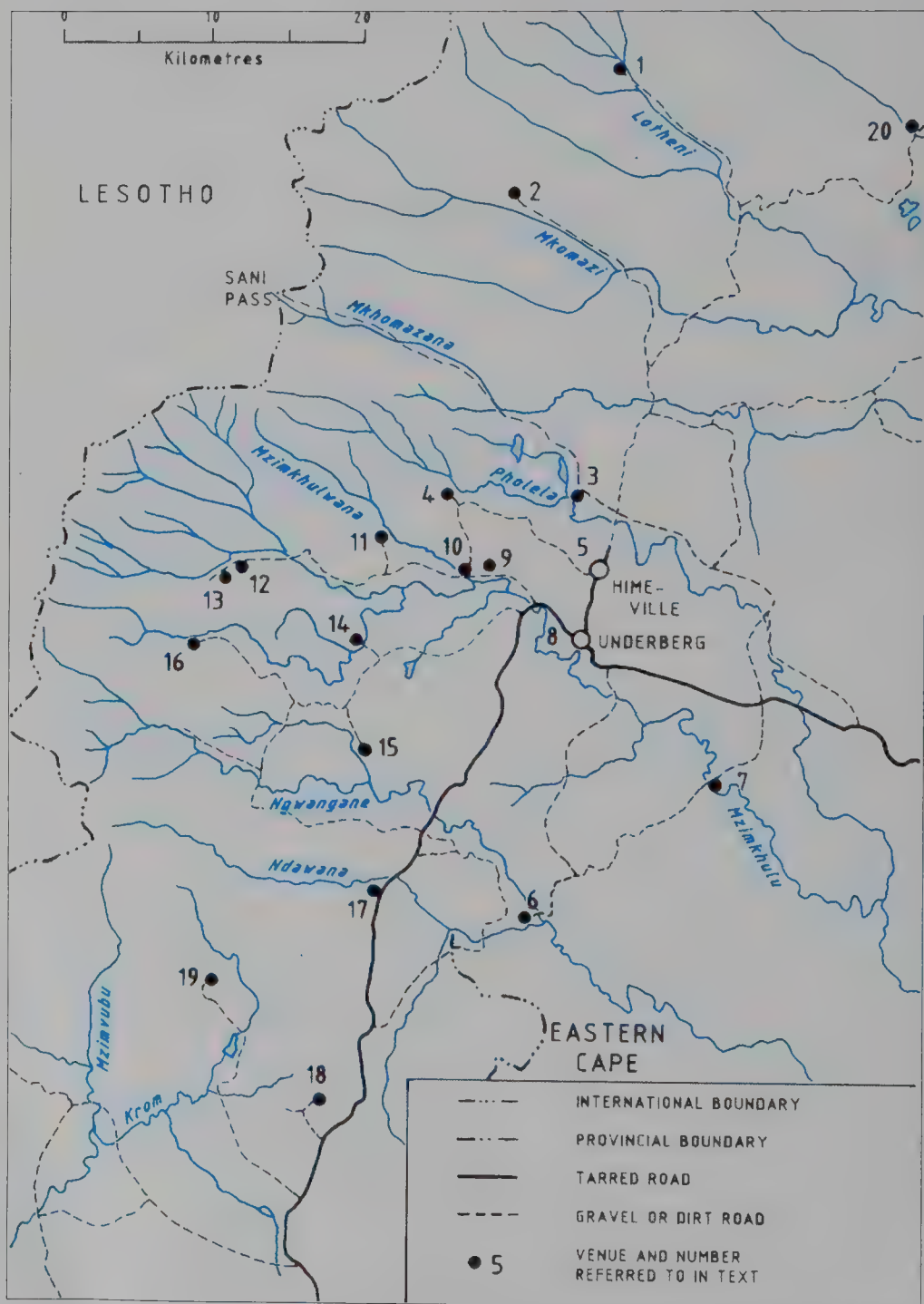


FIGURE 6: TROUT WATERS IN THE SOUTHERN DRAKENSBERG AND EAST GRIQUALAND

so many heavy-flanked fish caught in such unspoiled surroundings. The cost of a day's fishing on the trout waters in the Southern Drakensberg may range between R35 and R250 and generally, you get what you pay for. Copious accommodation and resort facilities are available, ranging from Natal Parks Board hutted camps, to rustic farm cottages, to three-star resort hotels with their picturesque golf courses set in the foothill approaches to the mountain wilderness. Many farms in the district have visitor accommodation, with access to better than average flyfishing, offering river or dam and sometimes both.

Flyfishing infrastructures range from the casual, as for instance at the large resorts which offer flyfishing simply as one of a number of recreational opportunities, to the dedicated and highly specialised resorts which exist only to provide flyfishing. The full spectrum of flyfishing opportunities include both stew-pond put-and-take, charged for by the kilogram, as for instance at Aviemore, right through to wild-spawning self-sustaining systems such as the lake at Giants Cup Wilderness Reserve, and Lake Curragh on the Ndawana River. And should a body tire of the endless opportunities on bank and boat and river, one might undertake a day or overnight excursion up the renowned Sani Pass, where the switchback track offers the only vehicular access into the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. But don't forget to bring your flyrod, for here too the rivers hold a head of wild-spawned fish; the progeny of stockings undertaken arduous years ago, when the pass was no more than a pony track. The pass is still only accessible to four-wheel drive vehicles, but for the angler not equipped with the latest twincab wimpwagon, excursions are offered by a number of local tour operators and the Tsani River, just over the top, is full of rainbow trout.

The matter of fishing licences in KwaZulu-Natal is in a state of flux. Trout fishermen may no longer need a fishing licence but, at the time of writing, the matter was, legally speaking, still unresolved. To avoid misunderstanding, anglers should phone Rob Karssing on (0333) 37250 for an update on the situation. Keep in mind, however, that all other rules and regulations pertaining to trout and trout waters still prevail. This includes being in possession of a permit to fish waters controlled by the Natal Parks Board. Note also that scheduled trout streams will remain closed from 1st June to 31st August whereas stillwaters, except for Highmoor, are open throughout the year.



## **DRAKENSBERG PARK**

The headwaters of many fine trout streams are located in the Drakensberg Park, which stretches in an unbroken line for more than 200 kilometres along the great escarpment. As custodians of the park the Natal Parks Board (NPB) controls access to these waters. In the southern Drakensberg the NPB offers fishing on the upper reaches of the Lotheni, Mkomazi, Pholela, Mzimkhulu, Mzimkhulwana and Ngwangwane rivers. All have extensive stretches of gravel and enjoy prolific recruitment from spawning and, as may be expected high up in these wild headwaters, the trout are plentiful, but generally small. Most of these streams are only partly accessible by vehicle and for the rest of the way may require a reasonably long hike. For details on access routes and permits contact the NPB Conservator in Underberg on (033) 701-1571. The policy of the Parks Board is to stock only stillwaters in its nature reserves and to leave stream trout to establish self-sustaining populations. Outside the reserves, stocking is left to clubs and other interested parties.

### **LOTENI NATURE RESERVE (1)**

Situated on the Lotheni River about 15 kilometres northwest of the Lotheni Bridge on the road from Himeville to Nottingham Road. Brown trout are found in this river which runs through the reserve for about 8 kilometres. Day permits are available, but visiting anglers can stay either at the main camp in twelve self-contained thatch cottages, set up on the hill overlooking the river, or at Simes Cottage (sleeping ten) with its own 0,4- hectare stocked pond. There is also a campsite. Visitors should supply their own provisions. Day permits for the river cost R10,00 (no bag or size limit) and for Simes Dam R20,00 (2 fish/angler/day, any size). For more information contact the Camp Office at (033) 702-0540.

### **VERGELEGEN NATURE RESERVE (2)**

Set on the headwaters of the Mkomazi, a brown trout stream, this is one of the most unspoiled wilderness areas within the Drakensberg Park. There are no facilities at all, and while generally closed to the public, it can be accessed by arrangement with the Officer-in-Charge (OiC), Cobham. The turn-off is 17 kilometres along the road from Himeville to Nottingham Road. From the turnoff, the track runs for 19 kilometres up the valley. This section is in very bad condition and should only be attempted in 4x4 vehicles. The difficult access ensures that there is very little rod



pressure and this section of the river, more than any other public water, can reward the angler with surprisingly large wild brown trout. For information and permits phone the OiC, Cobham Forest Station at (033) 702-0831.

**LAKE GLENCAIRN (3)**

This used to be the old Glencairn Trout Hatchery. Whereas the hatchery has been long closed, the new owners have converted some of the buildings into comfortable visitor accommodation and have given the dam a generous stocking of rainbow trout. Situated 3,6 kilometres up the Sani Pass road, Lake Glencairn comprises a picturesque 38- hectare dam from which both black bass and trout are to be had. I have always considered this water to have the potential of being one of the noteworthy fisheries in the district and while it has seldom in the past been adequately managed, there is a new seriousness and commitment in the owners, which bodes well for flyfishing. This water should come on rapidly and provided current management strategies are maintained, can only improve over the next few seasons. The accommodation is set in a thicketed loop on the Pholela River. This stretch of the river, while rather challenging, consists mostly of good deep runs with plenty of bank undercut. In wet years some sizable trout are resident. Lake Glencairn fishery shows great promise and is worth keeping an eye on through the 1998 and 1999 seasons. Contact: J.Leontsinis on (033) 702-1610 for further details.

**COBHAM FOREST STATION (4)**

Set high on the headwaters of the Pholela River, the Cobham entry point to the Drakensberg Park offers some enchanting sport on small headwater rainbows. Very few large trout are taken, but the unspoiled benefice of the surrounds is ample recompense for true nature lovers. A camping site is available as well as a single 3-bedroomed cottage. Cobham is accessible from either Himeville or Underberg. For detailed information and directions, phone the Officer in Charge on (033) 702-0831.

**HIMEVILLE NATURE RESERVE (5)**

This small reserve has two dams that are regularly stocked with both rainbow and brown trout. Small numbers of antelope have been reintroduced, including black wildebeest, blesbok and reedbuck. Though the bottom dam has been drained temporarily (1997) to fix a persistent leak, the top dam, while shallow and generally



quite weeded, fishes well on a dry fly and has yielded catches in the 3-kilogram range. Boating is permitted and rowboats are available for hire. An entrance fee is payable at the gates which are open from 06:00 to 19:00. Campsites served by an ablution block are available. Braai units are also provided. For reservations contact (033) 702-1036 during office hours.

#### **COLEFORD NATURE RESERVE (6)**

The NPB is closing down Coleford, long a favourite family destination for trout fishermen. The Board has put the operation out to tender and according to latest information negotiations are taking place with a potential purchaser. It is understood that the resort will continue to offer flyfishing and that there will be no interruption during the transition period.

The hutted camp consists of two 6-bedded chalets, three 5-bedded chalets and six 3-bedded rustic cabins. The chalets are self-contained and a communal

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kitchen and an ablution block service the cabins. A comfortable lounge with a fireplace is for the use of all visitors and the camp also has a tennis court. Sunnyside Cottage, at the western end of the reserve, about 5 kilometres from the hatted camp, can accommodate five visitors and is provided with basic necessities. Call (033) 701-1982 for up-to-date information about developments at Coleford.

**EARLY MIST (7)**

Access is 14 kilometres from Underberg along the Bulwer road and then 8 kilometres south on the gravel road to Coleford to the bridge over the Mzimkhulu River. Early Mist offers 2,5 kilometres of catch-and-release angling on the left bank of a prime stretch of the Mzimkhulu, with access to about another 7 kilometres on a neighbouring farm. Early Mist regularly produces river-bred rainbow trout in the 1- to 2- kilo range. Guiding is undertaken by appointment and accommodation is available for four adults. Two log chalets are under construction, as is a 1,5 hectare-dam that will be stocked with rainbows and brown trout. Contact B. J. Wentzel at (033) 701-1642 during office hours for information.

**UNDERBERG-HIMEVILLE TROUT FISHING CLUB (8)**

Wherever one might stay in the Southern Drakensberg, angling is never far away and is available through the Underberg-Himeville Trout Fishing Club, which provides for visiting anglers on a number of its dams. Operating from premises at the Underberg Country Club, their offices are open throughout the year, from 08:00 to 10:00 daily. It should be mentioned that rivers under the control of the club are reserved for members only, though international visitors in transit may be afforded the courtesy of a river beat if they present themselves at the UHTFC office. Full information can be obtained from the Club Manager at (033) 701-1041.

**RIVERGLEN COUNTRY HOUSE (9)**

An upmarket bed-and-breakfast establishment, Riverglen has access to a couple of hundred metres on the Mzimkhulu. The stretch includes an excellent run and a few good pools. This is a catch-and-release fishery and fish over 35 centimetres may not be kept. Riverglen is situated about 4,5 kilometres from Underberg, along the Drakensberg Gardens road. Contact: Punch or Karen Trollip at (033) 701-1926.

**AVIEMORE (10)**

This is a new venture operating from the old NPB trout hatchery about 6





kilometres along the Drakensberg Gardens road. Aviemore provides stew-pond put-and-take trout fishing, with the catch being charged for by the kilogram. Limited accommodation is available in two rustic cottages. For information phone Jevon Krogh at (033) 701-1117.

#### **GIANTS CUP WILDERNESS RESERVE (11)**

The reserve, a registered "Site of Conservation Significance" forms an enclave within the Natal Drakensberg Park. A wall across the Mzimkhulwana River has created a 14-metre deep 25-hectare lake with spectacular views of the southern Drakensberg. Extensive gravel beds upstream provide favorable spawning sites, thus ensuring a unique self-sustaining population, uncommon for a South African stillwater. Both rainbow and brown trout are present and though fish up to 4.8 kilograms are taken from time to time, smaller yearling fish are far more plentiful, in line with natural age/population profiles. A window system ensures a steady component of "grown-through" fish and no keepers are allowed between 1 and 2 kilograms. Accommodation is offered in luxurious self-contained thatch units but catering can be arranged. A total of 8 beds are available in the 4-sleeper Lakeside Lodge, the 2-sleeper Fishing Cottage and an overflow 2-sleeper rondavel. Accommodation is kept low deliberately to ensure one of the most private destinations. Fishing is in the lake and on the Mzimkhulwana River. Regular clinics are held for the tyro angler wishing to be eased into flyfishing disciplines. To reach Giants Cup follow the Drakensberg Gardens road from Underberg to a signpost marked Goshen, 14 kilometres out, and turn right for a further 4 kilometres. For reservations contact Wolf Avni at (033) 701-1511.

#### **CASTLEBURN (12)**

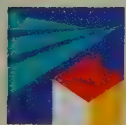
Still along the same road, but 22,5 kilometres from Underberg, Castleburn is a Stocks & Stocks time-share development set around an 18 hectare dam. The dam is stocked primarily with rainbow trout and the odd big fish of 2.5 kilograms or so is taken. The management allows day visitors to fish the dam at a cost of R20,00 per rod with a bag limit of two fish. The thirty self-contained units range from 8-sleepers to 6-sleepers and may be rented. Anglers must share the water with other recreational users. Also on the menu are horse-riding, canoeing, boating, sailing and swimming. There is a well-appointed clubhouse and restaurant. Contact (033) 701-1405 for information.



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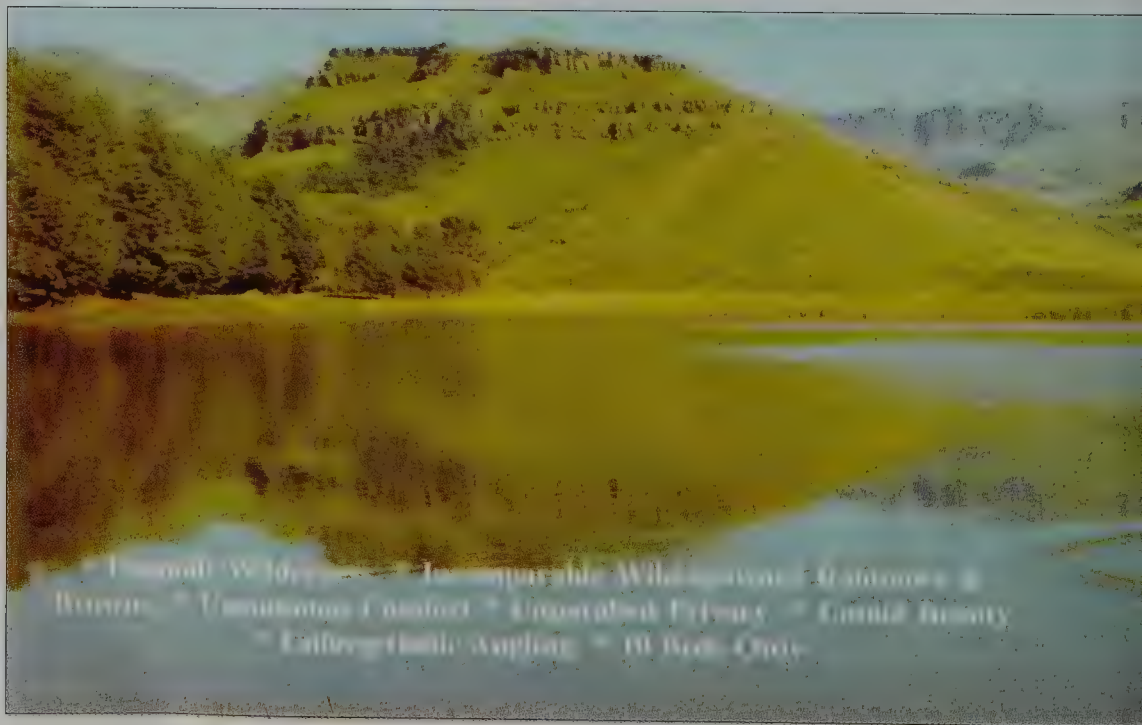


### **LAKE NAVARONE (13)**

Close to the previous venue, Naverone Estates features 20-hectare Lake Navarone, several smaller dams and about 7 kilometres of stream fishing. The lake is regularly stocked and has yielded some superb fish. Visitors can also partake in hiking, horse riding, tennis, sailing and windsurfing. Accommodation is in twelve self-catering stone cottages set around the lake from where the angler can not only enjoy uninterrupted mountain views but can also cook his catch a stone's throw from the lapping water's edge. For reservations and enquiries phone (033) 701-1236 or (033) 701-1369.

### **SPLASHY FEN TROUT FARM (14)**

Switching to venues situated along the Bushman's Nek road, Splashy Fen is located 20 kilometres from Underberg. Fishing is available along a 4-kilometre stretch of the Mzimude River which fishes well in wet years and is stocked during dry years. Trout up to 1.5 kilos have been taken from the river. The existing 1,5-hectare dam has been stocked with rainbow and brown trout and a second dam is under construction. Accommodation is available in two comfortable self-contained





cottages sleeping six apiece. For information call Peter Ferraz at (033) 701 1932.

**PENWARN COUNTRY LODGE (15)**

To reach this new resort, follow the Bushman's Nek road for 16 kilometres and turn left at the signpost for a further 4 kilometres. A section of the Ngwangwane River and one of its tributaries cross the farm and offer the angler about 8 kilometres of stream fishing. At present, the stillwater specialist has a choice of seven dams, most of which have been stocked with trout but some bass fishing is also available. Spurwing Lake, by far the largest of the dams, has been built in the tributary stream. Anglers visiting Penwarn Country Lodge may find themselves in the unusual situation of flyfishing whilst surrounded by grazing herds of stocked game which may include blesbok, springbok, hartebeest, eland and zebra. Guests can choose from a variety of activities, amongst others, wing shooting in season, game drives, horse riding, mountain-biking as well as a cattle round-up. Catered accommodation is available in the lodge or self-catered accommodation in the rustic cottages or log cabins. Contact Peta Parker on (033) 701-1777 for information and reservations.





### **CRYSTAL WATERS (16)**

This venue is near Bushman's Nek and offers trout fishing in a 26-hectare dam that has yielded some very good catches. From Underberg take the road to Swartberg. Immediately after crossing the Mzimkhulu turn right and follow the dirt road to Bushman's Nek for 20 kilometres. Turn right onto District Road D288 and continue on for a further 9 kilometres. A caravan site is available. For reservations and information phone Arthur Cole on (0374) 747 4662.

### **LAKE CURRAGH (17)**

Lake Curragh, on the Ndawana River is another southern Drakensberg water of particular note. Similar to Giants Cup Wilderness, the system is one of the very rare self-stocking natural-spawning fisheries. Whereas the Ndawana River is smaller and perhaps less stable than the Mzimkhulwana, Lake Curragh is much bigger, covering about 100 hectares. It is home to black bass and rainbow trout and is one of

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the oligotrophic waters in the district, in which old style “double-digit” fish are a distinct possibility. Generally though, high recruitment from spawning favours a tendency towards high numbers of smaller fish. The dam wall on the Ndawana is immediately upstream of the bridge on route 617 to Swartberg and the turnoff to the property a short distance beyond. Accommodation is available in four self-catering thatched units comprising three 10-sleepers and one 2-sleeper. For more information call Sheila Gilson at (0374) 747-4550.

The area to the southwest of Coleford in KwaZulu-Natal is commonly known as East Griqualand. For many decades its stillwaters have had the well-deserved reputation of being the home of truly large trout. Virtually all the water, however, is privately owned or under club control. When the first edition of this book was published two years ago, only one of these fisheries was open to the public. Now, the exceptional waters of the Rorichs have joined Belmont and, for those who can afford complete packages, there is additional access to some outstanding fisheries.

**BELMONT (18)**

The turnoff is approximately 50 kilometres from Underberg along the road to Swartberg and Franklin, right at the 32-kilometre post (from Franklin). From here follow the dirt road to the right for a further 4 kilometres. The 20-hectare eMoyeni Dam contains mostly rainbow trout with some browns that have been stocked in recent years. Fishing is open all year round and the owners permit boating and tubing. A self-catering cottage sleeping six to eight is available. For bookings phone the Cathcarts on (0374) 747-4682.

**LOCH RANNOCH, THE POTTS AND MOUNT ARTHUR (19)**

With a fully equipped self-contained 6-sleeper fishing cabin set on the shore at Loch Rannoch, the angler gains access to all three dams plus about 6 kilometres on the river. This fishery must rate as one of the best kept secrets in southern Drakensberg flyfishing and is one of the few fabled waters which, periodically, produces naturally grown-out fish in excess of 5 kilos. For reservations and information phone Lynn Rorich at (0374) 747-4684.

**TROPHY TROUT SAFARIS**

Peter Stone's Trophy Trout Safaris is based in Kokstad and has tied up the fishing rights on a number of outstanding and heretofore inaccessible waters. For the





angler who wants a big fish and can meet the cost of a complete guided package, TTS offers sole access to some of East Griqualand's most prestigious waters. The package includes everything from drinks to catering, accommodation, rod fees, kickboats and waders. Full details available from Peter Stone at (037) 727-3877.

#### **GENERAL**

The character of the countryside and fishing undergoes a great deal of seasonal change. During summer, with its afternoon thundershowers, the fish are often most active at first light, though the larger, deeper lakes can fish well throughout the day. Dragonflies, caddis, trico and baetid mayflies, and many midge species are all common. In winter, when waters are generally gin-clear, small flies in sizes 16 to 22 are often the only producers. Intermediate lines and very slow retrieves are popular with many of the more successful anglers.

For further information on the region, try one or more of the following sources:

Southern Drakensberg Travel & Tours	: (033) 701-1466.
Underberg-Himeville Trout Fishing Club	: (033) 701-1041
Southern Drakensberg Publicity Association	: (033) 701-1466.
Natal Parks Board	: (033) 701-1571.

#### **TACKLE SHOPS**

Flyfishing equipment is available from many dealers in KwaZulu-Natal. Most of them are located in the Durban - Pietermaritzburg area and they can also supply information on fishing conditions and venues. The following are some of the better known establishments.

NUD Sports & Saddlery, Underberg	: (033) 701-1096
The Flyfisherman, Durban	: (031) 21-3522
The Flyfisherman, Hilton	: (0331) 43-1911
The Kingfisher, Durban	: (031) 304-9551
The Urban Angler, Hillcrest	: (031) 75-4285

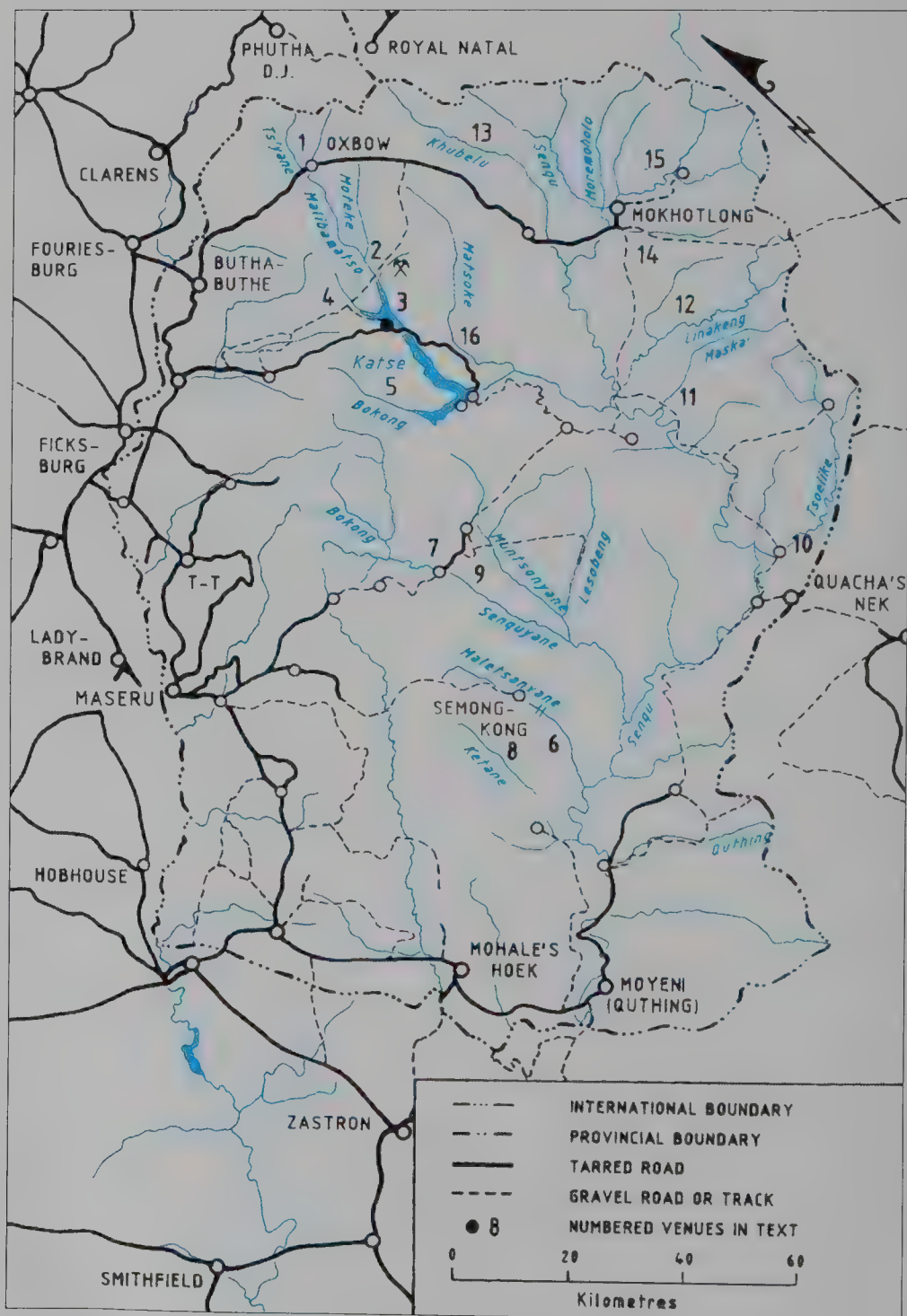


## TACKLE

Rods capable of handling 5- or 6-weight lines of various densities will suffice most of the time under normal conditions. On windy days, or in weedy dams with large fish, a 7-weight may be more appropriate. In fact, on some of the trophy waters now being opened up an 8-weight outfit may not be out of place. Float-tubing is very popular in the province. Because fish can be approached more closely, long casts are not necessary. Under these conditions, some anglers step down to 4-weight outfits, especially when fishing to midging trout with small imitations on floating lines.

Nymphs of the dragonfly and damselfly families are the major food source for trout in Natal dams. It is good sense to build a selection of stillwater patterns around flies that mimic these creatures. These include a variety of imitative patterns, attractors such as Woolly Buggers, Woolly Worms and Red-eye Damselfs, as well as the ever-popular Mrs Simpson and Walker's Killer, all in sizes 6 to 10. Smaller species of aquatic insects are simulated by nymph patterns such as the reliable Gold-ribbed Hares Ear, imitative or general -purpose mayfly nymphs, Montana Nymph, midge and corixa imitations and soft-hackle flies in sizes 10 to 16. Streamers imitating local baitfish can provide explosive action during autumn. Orange-predominant attractors are favoured in winter but, increasingly, anglers are finding that very small flies in sizes 16 or less are as effective, if not more so. Practically all subsurface patterns can be used with or without a metallic bead up front. On occasions when fish are visibly feeding on top, caddis or mayfly imitations do well. In Natal, few stillwater dry-fly fishermen would venture afield without the highly effective DDD. Unfortunately the DDD's available in tackle shops these days are pathetic imitations of the original pattern.

For stream fishing 2- to 4-weight tackle is the norm. In thin clear water trout rise readily to a dry fly and selectivity is rarely a problem. There are many effective patterns, but a non-specific mayfly imitation such as the Adams, a Royal Wulff for fast water, Elk-hair Caddis, RAB, and terrestrial patterns in sizes 14 to 18 are adequate for most situations. A subsurface selection can be built around a sparsely palmered Peacock Woolly Worm in sizes 8 to 14, American Gold-ribbed Hares Ear, Sawyer Nymph and Coch-y-Bondhu in sizes 12 to 16. A small brass or copper bead tied in at the head of the fly improves its fish-catching qualities in fast or deeper water. The nymph fished upstream has largely superseded the traditional winged wet fly but some anglers still use wets with telling effect. Popular patterns include the Connemara Black, Coachman, Invicta and the Teal series.



**FIGURE 7: TROUT FISHING VENUES IN LESOTHO**



By Jonathan Rogers



LESOTHO IS WILD-TROUT COUNTRY AND IS AN EXCITING destination for the more adventurous flyfisher. This scenic mountain kingdom is still, without doubt, the last great frontier for trout exploration in Southern Africa. In the past, Lesotho, for most of us, was a flyfishing destination only to be dreamt about, but now that is changing with the completion of the tarred road to the Katse Dam and the relative upgrading of the roads leading to Mokhotlong (**Figure 7**). It is a great place to fish, especially if you are used to having to book your fishing days or weeks in advance, or have to fork out a lot of money for often indifferent fishing. You will not have to contend with signboards and boundary fences, and seeing fresh footprints along the river will be a rare event. Fishing in Lesotho is virtually for free – a fishing licence costs M5,00 (R5,00) per year and is obtainable from the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Livestock, Bag A82, Maseru, Lesotho; Tel. (09266) 31-7284; or from any of its district offices.

Lesotho trout originate from stockings in the middle and late 1950's mainly by enterprising and resourceful flyfishers such as Captain Ken Shortt-Smith, Dick Southworth and Harry Fox. They organised for the despatch of trout eggs from the Jonkershoek Hatchery near Stellenbosch, which they then hatched and reared at the Police Training College in Maseru. From there the trout fry were flown by Dick Southworth to various remote landing strips near the headwaters of the streams and then distributed further by four-wheel drive vehicles or pack mules to their new destinations. It is a great credit to these men that their work was so successful under such difficult circumstances. Today there are literally hundreds of kilometres of water to fish although most of the fishing is centred on Katse Dam because of its accessibility and productivity. Virtually all the rivers entering the Senqu (Orange) River upstream of and including the Ketane River hold trout, especially in their upper reaches. The streams and rivers flowing west and south into the Caledon River, although very attractive, are too heavily silted and shallow and are no longer able to sustain trout populations.



Lesotho's trout rivers are characterised by wide fluctuations in flow volumes, with intermittent high flows during the rainy months, usually from October to mid-March, and very low water in winter. Heavy rains often result in the rivers becoming unfishable for up to a week at a time, especially in their lower reaches where they can also turn very muddy. However, it is quite possible that you will find fishable water fairly close by, either further upstream or perhaps over the ridge in the next valley. Rainfall, and the weather in general, is unpredictable and often localised at these high altitudes and even minor flashfloods can occur. Most of the rivers offer little in the way of cover, especially those sections above the tree line, which is at an altitude of approximately 2250 metres. Under these conditions the rivers are usually most productive when the flow is medium to high. If the river you are fishing is extremely low and clear (as they often are) your best chances for success will be during the last two hours before darkness and at first light. Lesotho trout are extremely shy and wary during low-water conditions because they are so vulnerable. They are often captured by youths that drive them into the shallows by beating sticks on the water. Local trout do not see that many artificial flies and all the patterns commonly used in South Africa such as Walker's Killers, Mrs Simpsons, Hamill's Killers, Woolly Buggers and Woolly Worms are effective. Midsummer hatches on the rivers can be quite prolific and then dun or grizzly dry fly patterns such as the Blue-winged Olive, Black Adams, Caribou Spider or Adams are most productive. Trout in Lesotho seemingly prepare for spawning earlier than those in South Africa and river fishing generally ceases towards the end of April and starts to improve again from September.

#### **OXBOW TO KAO AREA**

The new Oxbow Lodge is 110 kilometres from Ficksburg in the Free State. The Malibamatso River (1) holds only rainbow trout in this area but it invariably runs clear and good fishing is experienced about 4 kilometres below Oxbow Lodge. The Tsehlanyane holds smaller trout whereas the fish in the steep Motete are very fat. Lying at an altitude of more than 3 000 metres, the Motete is the highest trout stream in Southern Africa. The water can be very thin during dry periods but it has some very attractive pools in the lower section near the junction with the Malibamatso (2). Below the junction the Malibamatso holds good trout as far as the Kao tributary. The average weight of trout in this section is probably in the order of 500 grams but some

of the large pools hold trout up to 2 kilograms or more. The diamond diggings on the Kao are polluting the river on a staggering scale and this has resulted in heavy discolouration and siltation of the Malibamatso below the junction. It is unlikely that anything can survive in this impenetrable muck.

**KATSE DAM AREA (3)**

The Katse Dam is Lesotho's premier trout water. The village of Ha Lejone is approximately 92 kilometres from Ficksburg and the dam wall about 60 kilometres further. The easiest access to the water is upstream of Ha Lejone or about 6 kilometres downstream where the road is close to the bank. Rainbow trout and smallmouth yellowfish are abundant and well conditioned in this newly filled reservoir. The average trout caught is around 43 centimetres in length and weighs in at about a kilogram but specimens in excess of 2,5 kilograms have been landed. It is to be expected that the average size will increase and that much larger trout will be landed over the next four years or so. The best months for trout fishing are September to December and especially thereafter from March to mid-May. Yellowfish are mainly caught during midsummer. The least productive months for trout in the dam are January and February when they seem to go deep whereas yellowfish activity attains its peak during these months. Katse trout seem to have a passion for orange Woolly Buggers (beaded or not), especially during April and May, but generally, if they are feeding, they do not seem to be too particular about fly pattern. Much of the dam is steep sided. At present there are no boats for hire. The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) is preparing regulations for the conservation and management of fish in Katse. At present only rod and line and artificial non-spinning flies may be used. The daily bag limit is twelve trout per angler and no fish less than 25 centimetres may be kept. The trout season closes on the 31st of May and reopens on the 1st of September. Anglers must be in possession of a valid Lesotho fishing licence and it is quite likely that they will be requested to produce it when fishing at Katse.

**PELANENG RIVER (4)**

This river is always clear and fishes well when there is a good flow. It is good dry fly water.





### **BOKONG RIVER (5)**

One of Lesotho's prettiest and clearest rivers has unfortunately had many of its most beautiful green pools submerged by the waters of Katse Dam. It holds rainbow trout and, in the lower pools, also yellowfish. It is approximately 23 kilometres northwest of the Katse Dam wall.

### **SEMONGKONG AREA (6)**

Semongkong is about 220 kilometres from Ficksburg via Maseru. The Maletsunyane River (6) harbours rainbow as well as brown trout. The best fishing is below the 196-metre high Maletsunyane Falls in the gorge, which is accessible only to the fit and strong! The river is muddy and unfishable when it is running high.

### **MARAKABEI (7)**

The upper Senqunyane River above Marakabei fishes well upstream of the road bridge if the flow is relatively low. It holds rainbow trout and yellowfish.

The only vehicular access to the other main trout rivers, the Ketane (8), Mantsonyane (9), Tsoelike (10), Mashai (11), Linakeng (12), Upper Khubelu (13), Sehonghong (14), Mokhotlong (15) and Matsoku (16) is by 4x4. Visitors are strongly advised to employ a guide or, at the very least, learn to read and use a 1:250 000 topographic map when entering these remote areas. Virtually all the watercourses have single or 4x4 tracks following them and the Basotho people live throughout the country, even in the most far-flung valleys. Fishing is usually better the further you are from any village or resort. Although, for us, many of Lesotho's secret places may seem very inaccessible, for the Basotho virtually any place is reachable by donkey and it is possible to hire donkeys and guides at most mountain villages if you wish to venture into the remote valleys.

It is hoped that the Lesotho authorities will recognise the huge potential of their trout fishery and will take an active interest in developing, protecting and managing their wild-spawned trout stocks. If they do so then Lesotho is bound to become an important destination for flyfishers from Southern Africa as well as from overseas. The quality of many of Southern Africa's precious water resources is gradually deteriorating and more hardy and/or adaptable species of exotic fish such as carp and bass are invading the rivers and dams. One may wonder if, one day, Katse

Dam will be the last refuge for smallmouth yellowfish just as Wemmershoek Dam in the Western Cape is probably the only safe habitat for the endangered Berg River Minnow.

Infrastructure and tourist facilities are scarce in Lesotho and it is advisable to be well prepared for any unforeseen circumstances. Besides the Katse Dam area and its three main feeders, the Oxbow area and the Semonkong area, virtually all other trout fishing venues require the use of 4x4's. Try and stick to the following common-sense guidelines and you are less likely to have an unexpected or nasty experience.

- In remote areas travel in a group of two or more vehicles.
- Do not enter unknown territory without a guide.
- Do not venture into rough terrain if heavy rain is forecast – rivers and streams can quickly become unfordable and tracks impassable.
- Remember to keep your driving licence and passport with you and wear your seatbelt – the Lesotho authorities are strict on this!
- Passports are required and some nationalities require visas.

There are several access points into Lesotho but only the Ficksburg borderpost is open 24 hours per day.

Enjoy your flyfishing in Lesotho! There are some very big and beautiful trout here but when you catch your first one, please spare a thought to how it got there. Our flyfishing forefathers went to a great deal of personal effort to stock these picturesque and sparkling streams. As a gesture to their incredible contribution to our sport, to the trout themselves, and to our future generations of flyfishers, it would be fitting to admire and then release your wild-spawned Lesotho trout. Wild river trout and their environments are threatened throughout the world and deserve our protection.

#### INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

For guiding services contact Mr Louis du Toit of Ficksburg on telephone (05192) 4310 and for general information call Jonathan Rodgers on (05192) 6183. The following establishments offer accommodation:

Fraser's Semonkong Lodge, Telephone/Fax	:(05192) 3106
New Oxbow Lodge, Telephone/Fax	:(05192) 2247
Katse Lodge, near the Katse Dam wall, Telephone/Fax	:(09266) 91-0202





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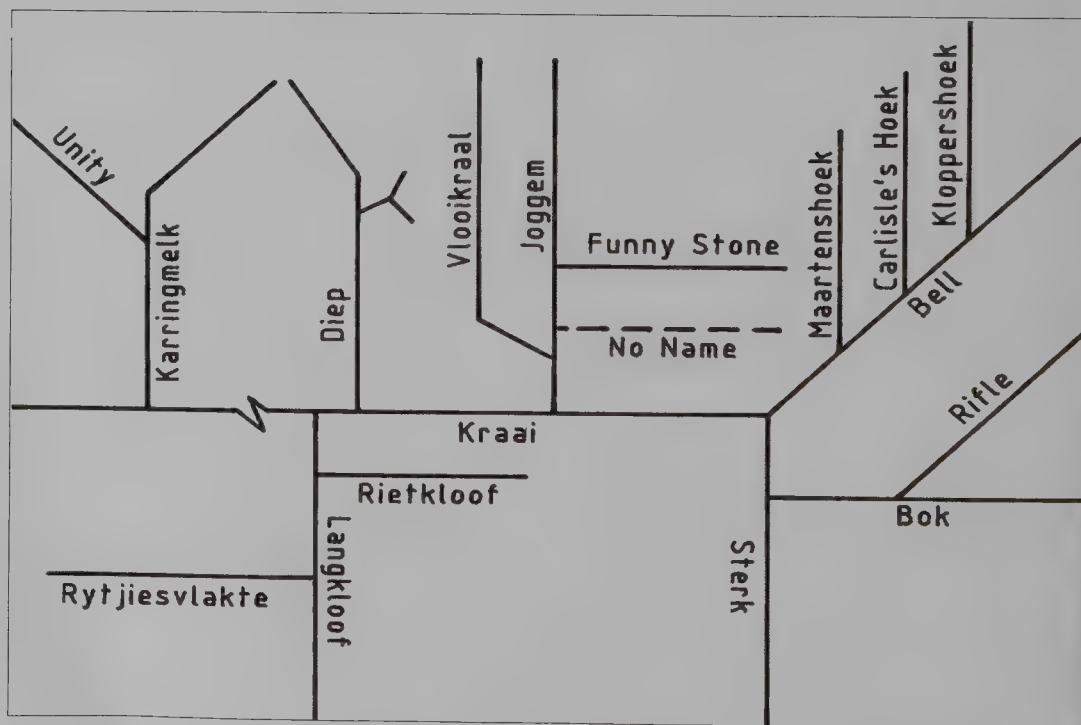


FIGURE 8: SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM OF THE UPPER KRAAI RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES



By Louis Wolhuter



## SENSE AND NONSENSE IN THE UPPER KRAAI CATCHMENT



FLYFISHERS VISITING THE RIVERS OF THE Lady Grey/Barkly East/Rhodes area for the first time are suddenly confronted with a plethora of quaint but strange-sounding names such as Vlooiakraal Spruit, Funny Stone Stream, Rytjiesvlaktespruit, Kraai River, Rifle Spruit, Karringmelk Spruit and so on (**Figure 9**). Not only is this host of waters scattered across the countryside in seeming gay abandon but also, so it is said, the total length of streams carrying trout is at least 800 to 900 kilometres, if not a megametre. So, how can we get a handle on all those peculiar names and how can we ascertain how much water there really is? The first part of the question is relatively straightforward and easy to systematise whereas the second part involves a fairly simple but laborious operation.

In a nutshell: all the streams in the area mentioned are tributaries of the Kraai River, which in turn is a tributary of the Orange River and, therefore, part of the Atlantic Ocean Drainage. Now some of these streams or rivers are first-order tributaries of the Kraai River, that is, they join the Kraai directly. Others are so-called second-order tributaries, meaning, in effect, tributaries of tributaries. There are even some third-order tributaries in that list of names above. Examine the simplified diagram (**Figure 8**) opposite and the picture should become as clear as a Bell (?).

It is easy to see that the Kraai River commences at the junction of the Bell River and the Sterk Spruit. Its other first-order tributaries are the Joggem Spruit, the Diep Spruit, the Langkloof River and the Karringmelk Spruit. Second-order tributaries are the Kloppershoek Spruit, Carlisle's Hoek Spruit and Maartenshoek Spruit (all tributaries of the Bell); the Vlooiakraal Spruit and Funny Stone Stream which join the Joggem Spruit; the Bok Spruit, a tributary of the Sterk Spruit; the Rietkloof and the Rytjiesvlakte Spruits (tributaries of the Langkloof) and the Unity Stream which flows into the Karringmelk Spruit. The Rifle Spruit, which joins the Bok, is the only named third-order tributary.

To determine the total length of trout streams, I consulted with Fred Steynberg and Billy Mollentze, both excellent flyfishers who know the district inside out. By



referring to a set of 1:50 000 scale topographic maps I was able to lead them mentally up into the headwaters and they would then pinpoint the farms furthest up where trout are known to occur in years of high water. The next step was to measure from that point downwards the length of each and every stream to where it either joined a larger stream or to where it no longer carried trout. The instrument one uses for this work is called a map measure and it consists of a thin tube with a tiny wheel at one end which connects via a drive shaft with a needle on a dial at the other end. The wheel rotates as you carefully trace out each little twist and turn of a feature on the map and the dial records the total distance travelled. Here now is how the various streams panned out. The numbers in brackets refer to the specific 50 000-scale topo map on which the feature mentioned appears.

#### **1 BELL RIVER**

From the kraals in the southern part of Tenahead 24 (3028CA) to its confluence with the Sterk Spruit, the Bell flows for a distance of 70 kilometres. The village of Rhodes is just about at the halfway mark. The river holds brown as well as rainbow trout and also yellowfish in the lower reaches.

##### **1.1 KLOPPERSHOEK SPRUIT**

From its confluence with the Bell River, the Kloppershoek extends northward to Chevychase 20 from where it spreads its tentacles westward to Tiffindell 17 below the 3001-metre high Ben Macdhui Peak (3027DB). Trout are reported from the vicinity of the ski-lodge downstream to the Bell – a distance of 24 kilometres. It is not known whether the small tributary joining the Kloppershoek on Mavisbank 30 carries trout. Fred Steynberg thinks this is unlikely.

##### **1.2 CARLISLE'S HOEK SPRUIT**

This small stream joins the Bell close to Rhodes. It probably holds fish only during high-rainfall years and perhaps as far upstream as Goatfell 55 (3027DB) – a distance of 8 kilometres, at most.

##### **1.3 MAARTENSHOEK SPRUIT**

Similar in character to the previous stream, the Maartenshoek may carry trout upstream for about 5 kilometres, more or less as far as the Longholm-Lammermoor boundary (3027DD).

**2. STERK SPRUIT**

From its confluence with the Bell, the Sterk Spruit is thought to hold trout as far upstream as Carrigbawn 321 on the Rhodes-Barkly Pass road, a distance of approximately 52 kilometres. The headwaters extend still further south and also eastward into the tract of high country stretching from immediately east of the pass as far as the 2770-metre high Ben Dearg Peak, (3127BB) about 15 kilometres distant. Two small tributaries, the Bamboeshoek Spruit and the Koffiehoek Spruit, join the Sterk on Coldbrook 311 and Manor Owen 268 respectively. It is said that normally they do not carry trout. The Sterk Spruit drainage is a rainbow trout fishery with yellowfish in the lower reaches.

**2.1 BOKSPRUIT**

The Bok Spruit is the major tributary of the Sterk, joining it on Blackrock 131, about 3,5 kilometres above the confluence of the Sterk Spruit and the Bell River (3027DD). Dave Walker says it is fishable as far as Ben Avon 255 (3128AA), beyond Gateshead, and literally within spitting distance of the headwaters of the Mooi and Little Mooi Rivers, which rise on the opposite side of the subcontinental watershed. This equates to approximately 49 kilometres of stream length.

**2.1.1 RIFLE SPRUIT**

From its junction with the Bok on Hillburn 174 (3027DD), the Rifle Spruit carries trout upstream for about 38 kilometres. It is readily accessible as far as Mount Mourne 122 but from here it twists and turns in a series of tortuous meanders through wild and lonely country as far as the Pentland-Cairngowr area, almost on the edge of the Drakensberg escarpment (3028CC). Adventurous souls can reach this remote upper section by means of a track branching off the Rhodes-Maclear road in Naude's Nek.

**3. KRAAI RIVER**

The Kraai commences at the confluence of the Bell River and the Sterk Spruit (3027DD). Trout occur from here downstream for an indeterminate distance but most are probably located in the 52-kilometre section that extends as far as the junction of the Langkloof River (3027DC). Below the confluence, anglers fishing for other species such as yellowfish, which are common in the Kraai, probably catch trout



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more or less accidentally. The Kraai has several additional tributaries that are important trout fisheries in their own right.

#### **4. JOGGEM SPRUIT**

This is the first major tributary to join the Kraai and it does so on the farm Middle Drumbo, about 13 kilometres from the start. It probably harbours rainbow trout as far up as Glenlyon A12, a distance of roughly 28 kilometres. The Joggem has three small tributaries which, from a flyfisher's point of view, are thought to be devoid of trout because of inadequate flow. The first, an unnamed stream originating in the rugged Wildfell area, joins the Joggem on the farm Reedsdell 13. The second, Bonnyvale Spruit, has quite an extensive catchment area on the farm of the same name and enters the Joggem about 3 kilometres below the Funny Stone junction. The third, another unnamed tributary, rises largely on Holderness 77 and joins the Joggem on Glencoe 38.

##### **4.1. FUNNY STONE STREAM**

This tributary joins the Joggem on Halstone 36 and it is believed to carry trout as far as Bidstone 51, about 9 kilometres upstream.

##### **4.2. VLOOIKRAAL SPRUIT**

The confluence of the Joggem Spruit and its major tributary the Vlooiakraal Spruit is on Upper Drumbo/Glencoe (3027DC), some 3 kilometres above the confluence of the Joggemspruit and the Kraai River. The Vlooiakraal Spruit, also known as Willow Run or Willow Stream in its upper reaches, carries rainbows and browns in fishable quantity as far up as Balloch 8, approximately 13 kilometres distant.

#### **5. DIEP SPRUIT**

This major tributary enters the Kraai River 16 kilometres downstream of the Joggem Spruit-Kraai confluence. It has a considerable catchment area extending to the north and west, and reaching to within a few hundred metres of the source of the Karringmelk Spruit below Snowdon Peak. Martin Davies says it holds a good head of trout but the water is largely inaccessible to the public and for this reason it is not known how much of the Diep Spruit System is fishable. If one assumes that trout are present as far up as the homestead on Snowdon 1, this amounts to 31 kilometres of main-stem water. The only tributary of significance joins the Diep Spruit on Lauriston



46. It is estimated that this nameless stream and its two feeders could add another 7 kilometres or so of fishable water to the total.

## **6. LANGKLOOF RIVER**

The Langkloof is the largest of the Kraai tributaries in the area under discussion and holds trout upstream for 63 kilometres – as far as Jollystone 341 near Barkly Pass (3127BB). The two major gamefish species in the river are yellowfish and rainbow trout.

### **6.1. RYTJIESVLAKTE SPRUIT**

Trout are present in the Rytjiesvlakte for 17 kilometres upstream from its confluence with the Langkloof as far as the farm Kapok Kraal 349.

### **6.2. RIETKLOOF SPRUIT**

This tributary joins the Langkloof on Lyonesse 214 (3127BA) and carries trout for 11 kilometres, as far as the Spes Bona-Audley Court area. The waterfall on Locksley 213 demarcates the boundary between the brown trout section upstream and the rainbow trout section downstream.

## **7. KARRINGMELK SPRUIT**

This is the last tributary of the Kraai River that is generally considered to be a trout stream. The fishable stretch extends from the vicinity of the road and rail crossings upstream as far as the causeway at Five Oaks, a distance of 25 kilometres. A rather inaccessible gorge section below the bridges also carries trout but for how far downstream is not known.

### **7.1. UNITY STREAM**

This minor water rises on Helvellyn Farm and flows southward to join the Karringmelk Spruit on Bekker 40 (also known as Woodlands). According to Dick Isted, it holds trout for 2 kilometres above the confluence.

## **SUMMARY**

In normal to high rainfall years, trout can be expected to be present over a total stream length of approximately 504 kilometres in the area under discussion. Of this, the Wild Trout Association controls about 200 kilometres and the Barkly East Angling Society about 90 kilometres. Anglers should note that in dry years streams can shrink dramatically and the figures above would be expected to decrease accordingly.



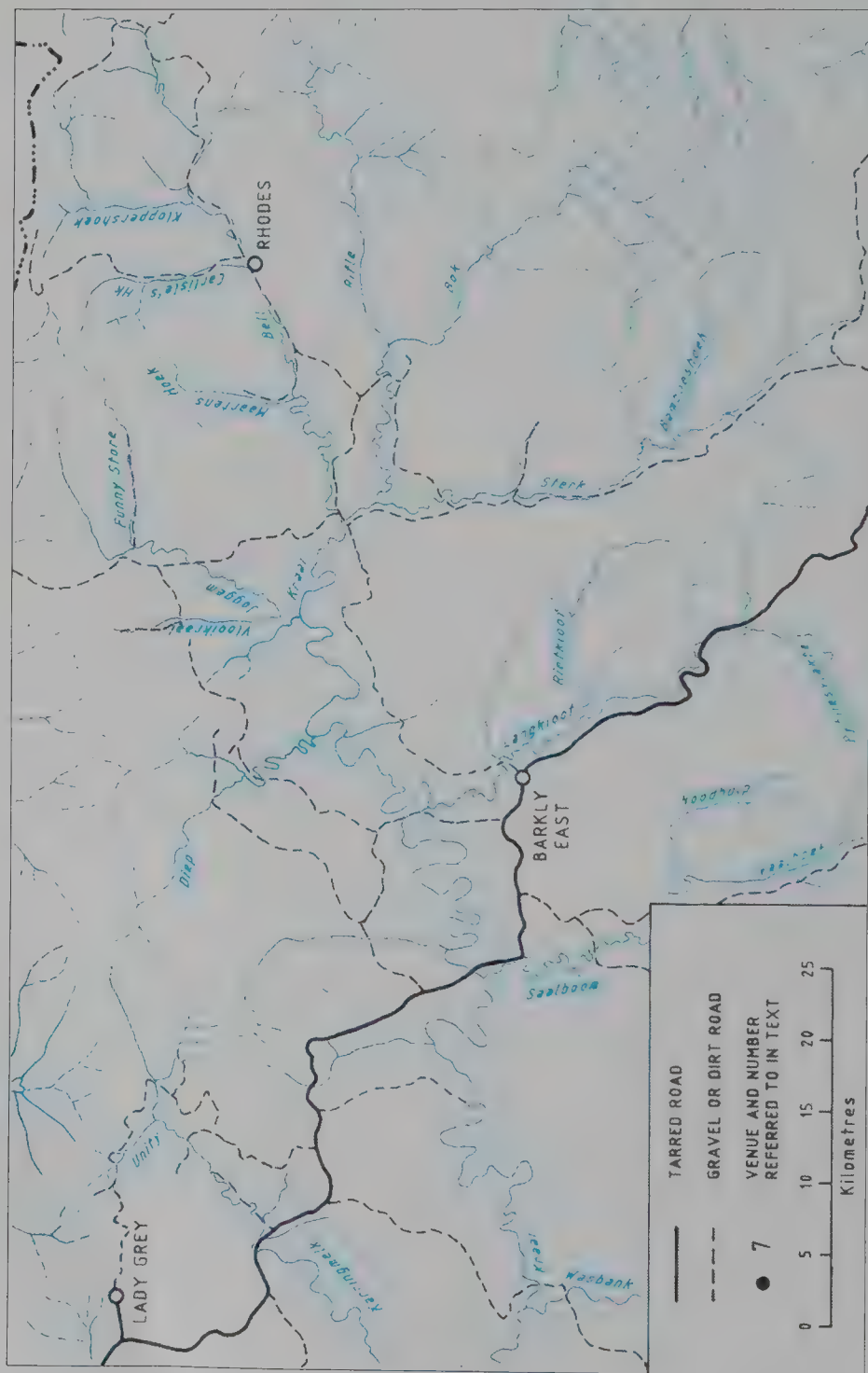


FIGURE 9: TROUT STREAMS IN THE LADY GREY-BARKLY EAST-RHODES AREA.



THE NORTHEASTERN CAPE HIGHLANDS lie along the southern border of Lesotho and is an extension of the vast Drakensberg Plateau (Figure 9). It incorporates the districts of Rhodes, Barkly East, Elliot, Lady Grey, Maclear and Ugie. It is rugged terrain with waters ranging from small streams more than 2500 metres above sea level to the fully fledged Kraai River which starts at the confluence of the Bell River and the Sterk Spruit at Moshesh's Ford about 1720 metres above sea level. Narrow headwater streams meander across remote plateaux, which can be reached in 4 x 4 vehicles, but eventually tumble down waterfalls and rapids in isolated gorges accessible only on foot or on horseback. The streams gradually descend into valleys with gentler gradients where banks are lined in places with indigenous trees and exotic willows and where access is easy even for passenger cars. This variety of water can cater for practically every taste and ability and about 200 kilometres of rivers and streams are open to the public through the good offices of the Wild Trout Association. The Association is a conservation conscious organisation consisting of members who own or administer flyfishing water and it offers these waters to visiting flyfishermen on a daily permit basis. Initially members of WTA were confined to the region under discussion but it now also includes representatives from the Maclear-Ugie area.

The montane environment is susceptible to rapid and localised weather changes and the hoary old cliché "all four seasons can be experienced within a day" should not be taken lightly. Historically, it has snowed in every month of the year in some or other part of these mountains, so warm clothing and rain gear are always essential. Normally, rain can be expected from September to November, with dry weather over the festive season and well into the New Year. The rains generally return again in March and tail off in April when the first frosts and snow can be expected.

The only tarred road is the R58 from Lady Grey to Elliot that bisects the area. The gravel roads are narrow and winding and must be approached with patience and driven with care. Please bear in mind, even though you may be well prepared, that





this is a remote area. The mountain environment is harsh and can be unforgiving and you are, therefore, urged to take the necessary precautions before venturing off the beaten track. If you intend spending much time in the more remote and inaccessible areas it makes sense to invest in a set of 1:50 000 topographic maps. They may be obtained from the Chief Director, Surveys and Mapping, Private Bag, Mowbray, 7705 or from the Government Printer in Pretoria. The following map reference numbers cover the relevant parts of the region: 3027CB and CD; 3027DA, DB, DC and DD; 3028CA and CC; 3127AB, BA and BB, and lastly 3218AA.

The local rivers contain rainbow and brown trout as well as yellowfish. Both species of trout take flies avidly from October through November and from March through April. Seasonal variations may occur, depending on climatic conditions, but under normal circumstances water in October and November has cleared after early spring rains and the rivers have been flushed. Air and water temperatures remain cool and stream fishing is good throughout the day. From December to early March the water temperatures can be as high as 19 °C and fishing is best in early morning or during the evening rise. Fishing after dark is not permitted. Yellowfish aside, the Bell River, upper Bok Spruit, Vlooiakraal Spruit and Kloppershoek Spruit offer flyfishers a choice of either rainbow or brown trout whereas the Joggem Spruit, Sterk Spruit, Rifle Spruit, lower Bok Spruit and the Kraai River are essentially rainbow-trout fisheries.

For the rivers, rods capable of handling 3-to 5-weight lines are most suitable. They should not be too long when fishing streams that have tree-lined banks. In open country longer rods come into their own. Whether to use a floating or a sinking line is determined by conditions and personal preference. Long leaders, with a strike indicator attached, round out the delivery system. A suitable fly collection should include Zak Nymphs, Zug Bugs, damsel and caddis imitations, Inchworms, Pheasant-tail Nymphs, Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear Nymphs and DDD's. Waders are indispensable from April to October but for the rest of the year wading wet is not uncomfortable. It is advisable to wear wading boots or sandals with felt or nonslip soles. A hat, sunscreen lotion and a rainproof jacket help to keep the elements at bay and a small backpack to carry all this paraphernalia on long trips is a real plus.

**LADY GREY**

The village lies at the foot of the Witteberg just off the R58 and 70 kilometres west of Barkly East. Trout fishing is confined to the Karringmelk Spruit and its tributary the Unity Stream. The section of the Karringmelk that is generally considered to carry trout extends from about the railway bridge upstream. Below the bridge the stream flows through a deep gorge, commonly referred to as "The Tunnel," that can be reached only on foot. It is rumoured, not surprisingly, that some huge trout have been taken here. Information at the time of going to press is that the riparian owners along the Karringmelk Spruit are now also members of the Wild Trout Association.

Lammergeier Nature Reserve straddles the upper reaches of the Karringmelkspruit and offers fishing on some 13 kilometres of this excellent little stream. The owners are now busy constructing some dams alongside the river. In addition to trout fishing, visitors can partake in hiking, mountain-biking and guided 4-wheeler quad-bike tours amongst others. The reserve can accommodate a considerable number of people in a farmhouse, a cottage, an alpine type house and two hiking huts. For further details and reservations call (05552) and ask for Margot Isted on 1902 or 2002. In Lady Grey itself, the Mountain View Hotel has come under new management and has been renovated recently. Hotel guests may fish sections of the Karringmelkspruit and the municipal dam. Phone Clive Hambley, Tel. (051) 603-1103, for information. See also the note on BERTA in the section on Rhodes.

**BARKLY EAST**

The Barkly East Angling Society (BEAS) is the pioneer trout club in the district and was founded by the Mollentze brothers, Bob and Ernie. BEAS controls several dams, the municipal water and the Langkloof River and its tributaries. The Langkloof has long had the reputation of being the river in the district from which most of the lunkers are taken. Day tickets are available at R15,00 per angler. For details and information phone Christo Buys at (045) 971 8005. The Kraai River and its tributaries below Moshesh's Ford are within easy driving distance of anglers based in Barkly East. Groceries, meat, fruit, vegetables and fuel can be purchased in Barkly East and car repairs can be carried out if needed. The town has its own hospital as well as medical practitioners and a pharmacist. Accommodation is available at the Old Mill Inn run by Fred Woodcock, Tel. (045) 971-0277. Fred can also supply information on fishing.



## **RHODES**

Rhodes is approximately 50 kilometres along the gravel road from Barkly East to Mount Fletcher and Maclear. This Old World village is situated in the valley of the Bell River at the foot of Naude's Nek which, at an altitude of 2499 metres, is the highest public mountain pass in South Africa. Rhodes is the nerve centre of the Wild Trout Association and it is within easy access of the Bell and its tributaries as well as the Sterk and its tributaries. Permits to fish WTA waters may be obtained from any of the persons listed below. Possession of a valid Eastern Cape fishing licence is a prerequisite.

Rhodes: Fred Steynberg, (04542) 21 or Dave Walker, (04542) 9203.

Sterk Spruit/Moshesh's Ford area: Basie Vosloo (04542) 994.

Vrederus area: Jean-Marie Naude, (045) 323-1572.

WTA provides visiting anglers with a basic list of waters and accommodation free of charge. For an extra R20,00 a map is included. For information about guiding and the various packages available contact Fred Steynberg or Dave Walker at the numbers given previously. Bookings must be made in advance. Flies and basic tackle items are available at the hotel.

Rhodes offers a variety of accommodation ranging from a hotel and guesthouses to self-catering accommodation within the village as well as on neighbouring farms. There are also activities such as horse riding in the village, outrides and guided horse trails to adjacent valleys, mountain-bike trails, greywing partridge shooting and so on. Motor fuel and oil can be purchased in town and vehicle repairs undertaken during normal working hours. A wide range of catered and self-catering accommodation, most of it adjacent to or close to the rivers mentioned earlier, is available. In fact, the amount of accommodation being offered here and elsewhere in the region has increased to such an extent, it is no longer feasible to try and list each establishment. Prospective visitors should contact the Barkly East and Rhodes Tourist Association (BERTA) on telephone (045) 971-0123 or Fax (045) 971-0350 for full details.





By Elwin Love



ISING HIGH ON THE EASTERN SLOPES of the Drakensberg are a number of streams that eventually run into the Indian Ocean via the Mzimvubu River (**Figure 10**). The main rivers are the Wildebees, the Mooi, the Pot, the Tsitsa and the Luzi and their many tributaries and they are of considerable historical and emotional significance to South African flyfishermen.

Sydney Hey's book "Rapture of the River" eulogised the rivers of Maclear and, although much has changed in the intervening years, many of the rivers, which they stocked and fished, are much as he left them. Some are charming "Waters of Lilliput", filled with small fish and ideally suited to one or two weight rods, small flies and light tippets – the sort of river where even a beginner can achieve success. Others are bigger waters producing bigger fish including brown trout. An added advantage is that there are now far more dams than in Hey's day. Dams such as those on Vrederus, Trout Valley, Fairbridge, Killarney and others produce exceptional trout, some of them wild river fish others stocked as fry. In the past year these stillwaters have produced several fish in the 4- to 4.5- kilo range and they perfectly complement the many streams and rivers with which the Maclear region is blessed – streams and rivers which often do not see an angler from one month to the next. Success is never guaranteed in flyfishing, but this area provides so many opportunities, such a wide variety of water, that the chances of you not enjoying your stay are small.

Maclear is a convenient jumping-off point for several top class fisheries strung out along the gravel road leading up to Naude's Nek. The first three have no accommodation and are day-ticket venues only. Fishing these waters has to be arranged through the Wild Trout Association on telephone (045) 323-1035 or cellphone 083 301 5446.

## KILLARNEY (1)

This farm is 13 kilometres north of Maclear and to the east of the road. It provides fishing for rainbow trout in a 15-hectare dam as well as along 12 kilometres of the Big Pot River. Rainbow and brown trout can be taken in a 3-kilometre stretch of the Little Pot River.

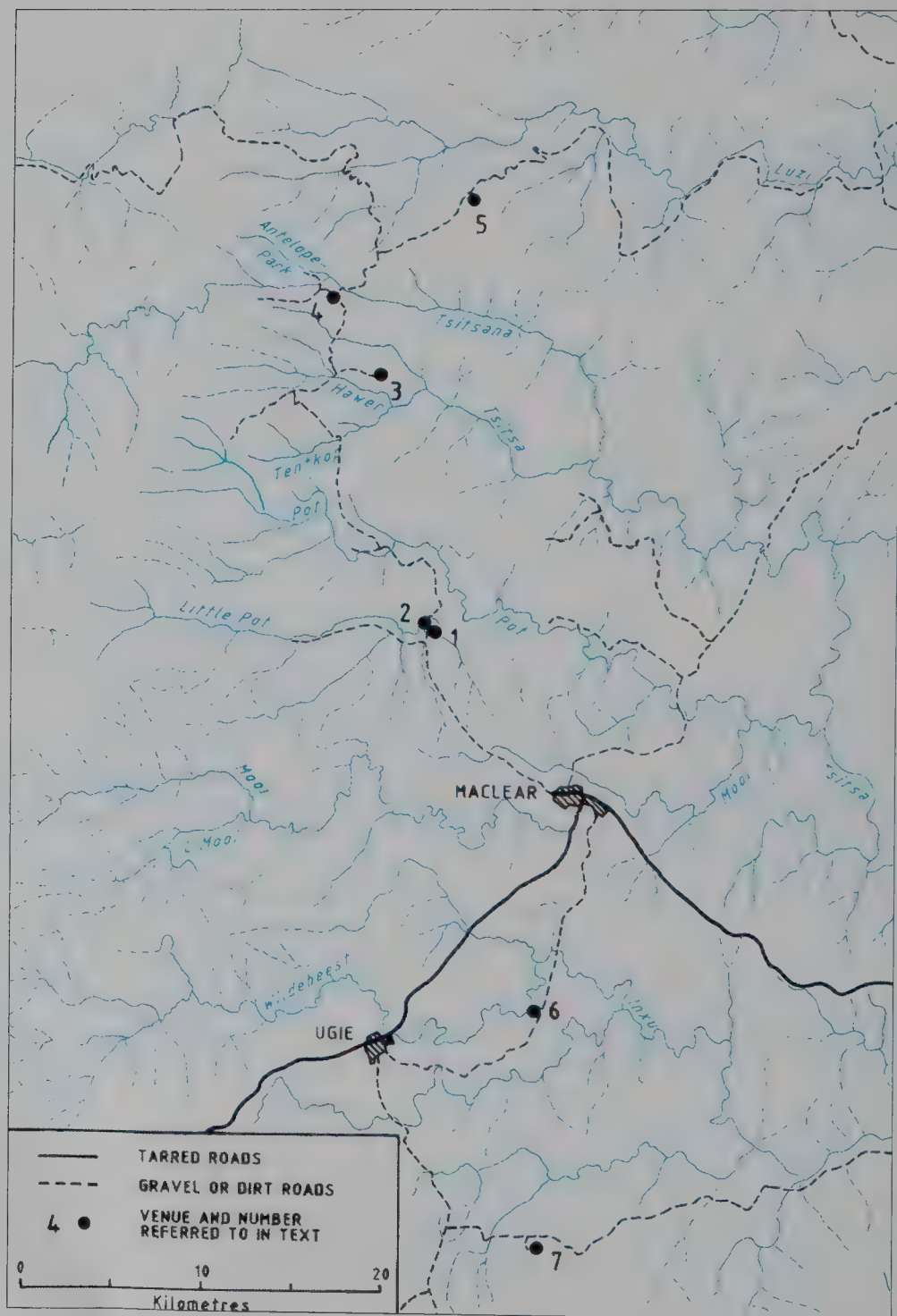


FIGURE 10: TROUT FISHING VENUES IN THE MACLEAR-UGIE AREA

**FAIRBRIDGE (2)**

About 1 kilometre beyond Killarney but on the western side of the road is Fairbridge Farm. It provides fishing for rainbow as well as brown trout in either a 10-hectare dam or on 6 kilometres of the Little Pot River.

**DIEPFONTEIN (3)**

Look for the first turn-off north of the Hawer Spruit approximately 40 kilometres from Maclear. Turn east at the signpost marked Rush Valley and continue along the dirt road for a further 3-kilometres or so. These are rainbow trout waters and you have a choice of fishing either a 3-hectare dam or 6 kilometres of the Tsitsa River plus a bit of the Hawer Spruit above its confluence with the Tsitsa. The trout population on Diepfontein is rather unique as there has been no subsequent introduction of fish since the original stocking of the Tsitsa took place in the early part of the century.

**TROUT VALLEY (4)**

This well-known locale is situated on the western side of the road, a couple of kilometres past the Diepfontein turn-off and about 50 kilometres from town. At present there are six dams on the property, five holding a mix of brown and rainbow trout and the sixth browns only. A further two dams are currently (late 1997) under construction. The largest dam is guesstimated to be about 10 hectares in extent. The stream fisher has access to 8 kilometres of the Antelope Park Spruit, a rainbow trout stream. Accommodation is available in an old farmhouse that can sleep six to eight. For full information call (045) 323-1022 or 323-1761.

**VREDERUS (5)**

About 53 kilometres out from Maclear the road passes the Elands Heights Police Station on the left. A few hundred metres beyond turn right onto the Mount Fletcher road and continue for a further 6 kilometres to Vrederus. The turn-off to the right is clearly signposted. The fishery is situated at an altitude of almost 1900 metres on the headwaters of the Luzi River System. The dam is some 10 hectares in extent and is stocked with rainbows and browns. Several fish in the 2,5-kilogram class have been landed in the recent past. Float-tubes and kick-boats are permitted. Although Vrederus allows fishing on a day-ticket basis, the number of rods is restricted to a maximum of eight and overnight guests have preference. Accommodation is





provided in a self-catering thatched cottage that can sleep six to eight. Non-anglers can partake in horse riding or hiking. For reservations and information contact Jean-Marie Naude on (045) 323-1572.

To the south of Maclear, in the general vicinity of Ugie, there are at present two active trout-fishing venues.

#### **COUNTRY HOUSE (6)**

This establishment on Remia Farm can be reached by following the district gravel roads from either Maclear or Ugie. It is advisable to get directions beforehand. Country House offers fishing on a section of the Wildebees River and bed-and-breakfast accommodation in a 6-sleeper cottage. Phone (045) 333-1531 for reservations and directions.

#### **RAINBOW RETREAT (7)**

Located approximately 16 kilometres southeast of Ugie on Agassiz Farm, this rainbow trout fishery is centred on two large stillwaters measuring an estimated 30 and 40 hectares respectively. Accommodation is available in a self-catering cottage that can sleep six to eight people. For further information and directions call (045) 333-1335/7.

Permits are required to fish those rivers traversing North-East Cape Forests property, the biggest riparian owner in the region. Phone (045) 333-1130 for details. The Wild Trout Association, Tel. (045) 323-1035 or 083 301 5446, will also assist with permits and accommodation in the general area, whereas permits for Maclear Flyfishing Club waters only are obtainable by calling (045) 323-1037.

Accommodation in Maclear is available at the Royal Hotel, Tel. (045) 323-1176, long a favoured hostelry of an earlier generation of trout anglers. Bed-and-breakfast enthusiasts can choose between The Grizzly Hackle, Tel. (045) 323-1339, that sleeps four or the Settlers' Lodge, Tel. (045) 323-1029, that can accommodate nine persons in six bedrooms. Bob's Place, 14 kilometres out on the Tsolo road, has a self-catering cottage sleeping six. Call (045) 323-1931 for reservations.

#### **ELLIOT**

The village is situated about 70 kilometres southwest of Maclear along the R56 and 60 kilometres from Barkly East on the R58. It lies at an altitude of 1450 metres in a most attractive area of rolling hills and valleys. Trout can be taken in a

number of municipal or private farm dams in the area whereas the upper reaches of the Sterk Spruit are but a short drive away via Barkly Pass. Numerous dams around Elliot are stocked with largemouth and smallmouth bass and, for those who prefer fishing for our indigenous species, yellowfish are abundant in the Tsomo River, a few kilometres from town. The best months for big fish and especially a hooked-jaw cock fish, are from March through to May in both rivers and dams. The warm spring and summer evenings are great for nymph and dry-fly enthusiasts. Mrs Simpsons, Walker's Killers, black Woolly Worms, black Taddies and damselfly and dragonfly nymph imitations are the most popular flies locally.

Flyfishing can be arranged through the Elliot Kingfisher Angling Club. The daily rod fee is R30,00 and the bag limit 3 fish per angler per day. For bookings and information contact Ben at (045) 313-1889 (o/h) and 313-1026 (a/h) or Mof at (045) 313-1017 (o/h) and 313-1400 (a/h)

Flyfishing Tackle can be purchased at Winners Sports Shop, Tel. (045) 313-1889. For accommodation try the Merino Hotel, (045) 313-1137, the Mountain Shadows Hotel, (045) 313-2233, Myburgh Accommodation, (045) 313-1003 (o/h) or 313-1564 (a/h), or Tulloch, (045) 313-1197 (o/h) or 313-1545 (a/h). Information on the municipal caravan site may be obtained from (045) 313-1011.

## *Flyfishing Without The Crowds*



Stay with us in Ugie, in the Maclear district, amidst the solitary splendour of the southern Drakensberg and enjoy world class flyfishing on pristine streams, rivers and lakes of the North Eastern Cape.

**Pam or Peter Baum, Agassiz Farm Tel. (045) 333 1335/7**



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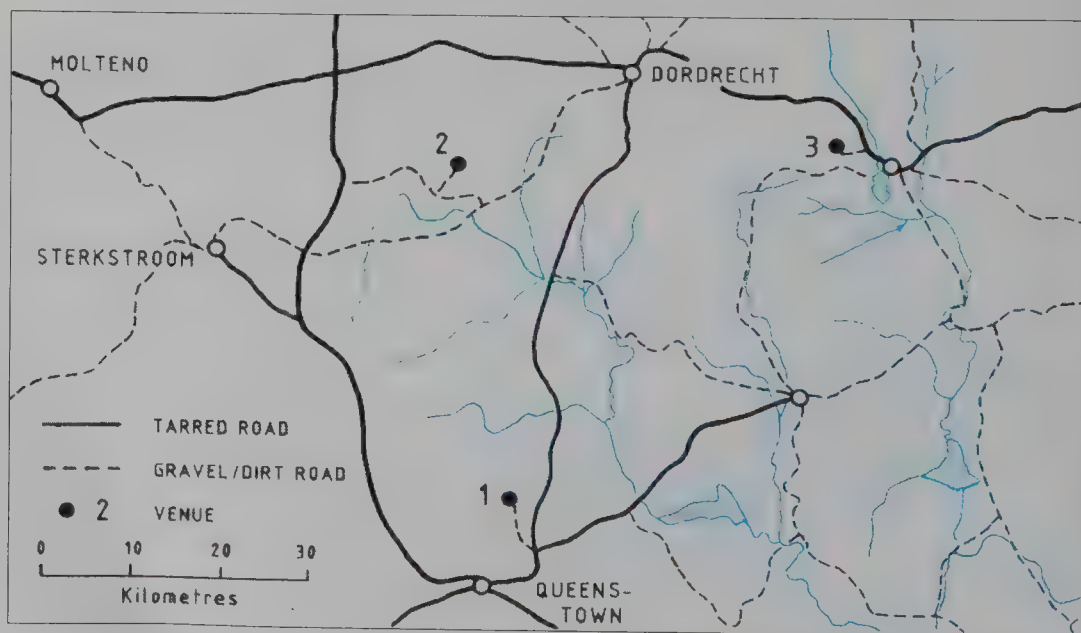


FIGURE 11: TROUT DAMS IN THE QUEENSTOWN REGION

By Graham Pohlmann



QUEENSTOWN LIES AT THE EASTERN EDGE of the Karoo. The town itself is only 1100 metres above sea level but it is backed by a broad belt of country exceeding 1800 metres in altitude and extending all the way round from the northwest to the north and southeast (**Figure 11**). Many peaks in this mountainous terrain attain a height of close to or in excess of 2000 metres. The combination of high altitude and favourable water-bearing rock formations results in numerous springs that yield water cold enough and in sufficient volume to sustain vibrant stillwater trout populations. The surroundings are as beautiful as they are wild and attempts are always made where possible to avoid any changes to the natural landscape. All the waters available belong to private landowners but are accessible through the Queenstown Flyfishing Club (QFFC).

Trout fry are stocked in the dams before they reach a length of 3 centimetres, so those that survive to a catchable size have had an absolutely minimal exposure to humans and artificial food. For practical purposes consider them to have been spawned and grown in the wild, which is one of the reasons why they can be difficult to catch. The fry find conditions to their liking for they grow in one year from 3 to 35 centimetres. Rainbow trout are commonly stocked but for the past four years browns have also been introduced. They have not really started showing up in the catches, which we believe is due to the fact that they mature more slowly than rainbows.

The club has access to five dams at present, all of which are easily reached by passenger car and mostly on tarred roads.

## OAKLEIGH (1)

Because it is only 15 kilometres from town Oakleigh is the dam that is fished hardest. Nonetheless trout in the 2-kilogram bracket are not uncommon and one angler, in his first year, took 85 fish that exceeded this mass. Generally Oakleigh trout will be around the 1-kilogram mark. The biggest caught to date tipped the scales at 3,6 kilograms.

## PENHOEK PASS (2)

This fishery is about 80 kilometres from Queenstown and is reached by





following the N6 towards Jamestown and turning east below Penhoek Pass. The three dams are situated on the headwaters of the White Kei River and the water is crystal clear all year round. Tennant's Dams are approximately 4,5 and 2 hectares in size and have a reputation for big fish, having already produced several trout in excess of 4 kilograms. The majority of the fish taken weigh in at about 1,5 kilograms. Badasson's Dam is immediately below Tennant's and although the trout are smaller many more are caught.

### **INDWE (3)**

The last of the five dams controlled by QFFC is near Indwe, about 100 kilometres from Queenstown. Fishing is very good during the winter months when the water is extremely clear but good catches are made in summer when there is a great deal of minnow activity, as is also the case in all the other dams. Expect to catch fish in the 1,5- to 2- kilogram range with the biggest reaching 3 kilograms.

There is no accommodation at any of the club waters and they can only be fished on the issuance of a day ticket which costs R30,00 and allows the angler to take four fish. To obtain permits, information on fishing conditions and directions call Mark Iveson on 083 702 4204 or Graham Pohlmann on (0451) 2391 or 5584 or 7191 or cell phone 082 923 0346. Queenstown has a variety of accommodation on tap, including bed-and-breakfast facilities, and they are also prepared to assist in this respect.

## ***THE CROFT GUEST COTTAGE NEAR GUBU DAM***

**A** superbly comfortable self catering thatched cottage sleeping five persons, fully equipped with all facilities including colour TV, telephone, fireplace and lines. Perfectly situated for the KOLOGHA TRAIL and other hiking forest and wilderness trails.



**Enquiries: Cameron Mc Master,  
Box 61, Stutterheim 4930  
Tel: 0436-31330 (w) or 32796 (h)  
FAX: 0436-31931**

By Rodney Webb



UBU DAM IS SITUATED AT THE FOOT OF THE Amatola Mountains approximately 15 kilometres west of Stutterheim (**Figure 12**). To reach it, turn onto the Keiskammahoek road at the only traffic light in Stutterheim and continue straight on for about 19 kilometres until you see the dam on the right. The Stutterheim Trout Angling Club (STAC) controls the fishing and non-members require a daily rod permit to fish this impoundment.

Gubu is stocked with rainbow and brown trout and has a surface area of 108 hectares when full. Float-tubes, kick-boats and boats are permitted but no petrol driven craft are allowed. Only recognised flyfishing tackle and artificial flies may be used. Wet fly patterns such as Mrs Simpson, Walker's Killer and Woolly Buggers work well and nymph patterns are also effective. In summer there are large numbers of minnows in the shallows and any type of attractor can be productive. During a hatch large dry flies score well. According to our catch returns November is the best month and late afternoon the best time of day. There is no closed season. Fishing from the side is restricted when the dam overflows because of growth on the banks. The best area for bank fishing is Doctor's Creek (**2**). Otherwise some sort of craft is advisable. Day-tickets can be purchased at the Eagle's Ridge Hotel or at The Manderson near Stutterheim. For information on fishing and related matters call (0431) 40-1520 any time or (0431) 54822 (o/h) or 35-2249 (a/h).

Accommodation near Gubu is available at the Eagle's Ridge Hotel, (0436) 31200, The Manderson Country House, (0436) 32322, or the self-catering Croft Cottages, (0436) 32796.

All three establishments are accessed from the Kologha Forest road that turns off the Gubu road 3 kilometres outside Stutterheim. Call SAFCOL on (0436) 31268 for permits and information on the camping and picnic site (**3**) at Gubu Dam. The STAC clubhouse (**1**) at the dam is for the use of club members and country members.



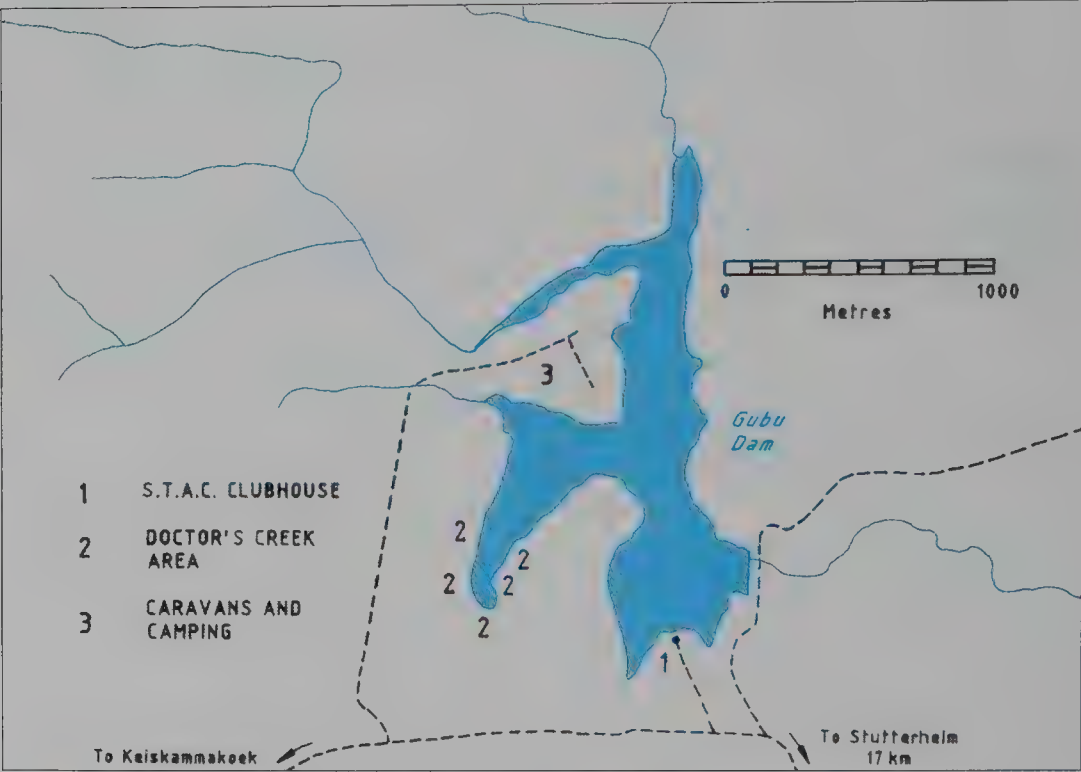


FIGURE 12: GUBU DAM NEAR STUTTERHEIM



FIGURE 13: MADEN AND ROOIKRANS DAMS NEAR KING WILLIAM'S TOWN

By John van der Merwe



THE TWIN DAMS, MADEN AND ROOIKRANS, impound the headwaters of the Buffalo River (**Figure 13**). To reach them, turn at the Rooikrans Dam signpost on the R346, 12 kilometres north of King William's Town and 30 kilometres south of Stutterheim. Follow the gravel road, which eventually crosses the Rooikrans Dam wall, for a further 12 kilometres to Maden Dam. The 76-hectare Rooikrans Dam, is open to the public whereas Maden (10 hectares) is under the exclusive control of the Frontier Acclimatisation Society Trout Club, the oldest trout-fishing club in Africa. Visitors require a daily rod permit to fish the dam. Maden Dam lies at the start of the Amatola Hiking Trail and is one of the most picturesque sights of the area.

The Buffalo River above Maden Dam dries up to such an extent in winter that no spawning can take place and so the two dams are restocked annually with rainbow trout fry and fingerlings. The stocked fish are obtained from Rhodes University as well as from the local Pirie Hatchery situated below Maden dam. The hatchery welcomes visitors. The most productive areas in Maden Dam (**see Figure 13**) are the Buffalo River just above the inlet (1), Page's Corner (2) on the eastern side of the inlet, and John's Pantry (3), close by the wall. Studies have shown that minnows and crabs form an important part of the trout's diet and it is not surprising that flies such as Walker's Killer, Mrs Simpson, Olive Matuka, Millionaire's Taddy and Red Setter produce well. At dusk the trout are amenable to taking small dries, particularly a Royal Coachman. The river section at the inlet is a favoured area. Smaller flies are more successful in Maden Dam but in Rooikrans, which is dominated by smallmouth black bass, the opposite is true. Here a large Green Matuka fished slowly along the bottom on a fast sinking line at midday is more likely to draw a response from a lunker bass. On average, anglers can expect to hook and land two to four fish per day but only three may be kept. To date the largest trout landed and recorded at Maden weighed 2,96 kilograms. Float-tubes may be used on both dams but battery-powered boats are restricted to Rooikrans. The best fishing months are from September to





March and, during the day, the evening rise is the time most favoured by anglers. Bass fishermen on Rooikrans prefer the early morning and late evening. Day tickets for Maden Dam are obtainable from L.G. Sports, (0431) 21144, in East London, from 08:00 To 17:00, or from the Criterion Supermarket, (0433) 23027, in King William's Town between 07:00 and 19:00.

Hotel accommodation is readily available in King William's Town. Out at Maden Dam, the club maintains an overnight cabin situated right on the water's edge, and provided with two double bunks. Security is good as the gate at the entrance to the dam is locked overnight and a floodlight remains on until morning. The cabin is available at R10,00 per night and can be booked in advance at the Criterion Supermarket above. Visitors requiring any other assistance can contact FAS Club Chairman, John van der Merwe on (0431) 51792. He has fished Maden Dam for twenty years and is only forty-five minutes away.

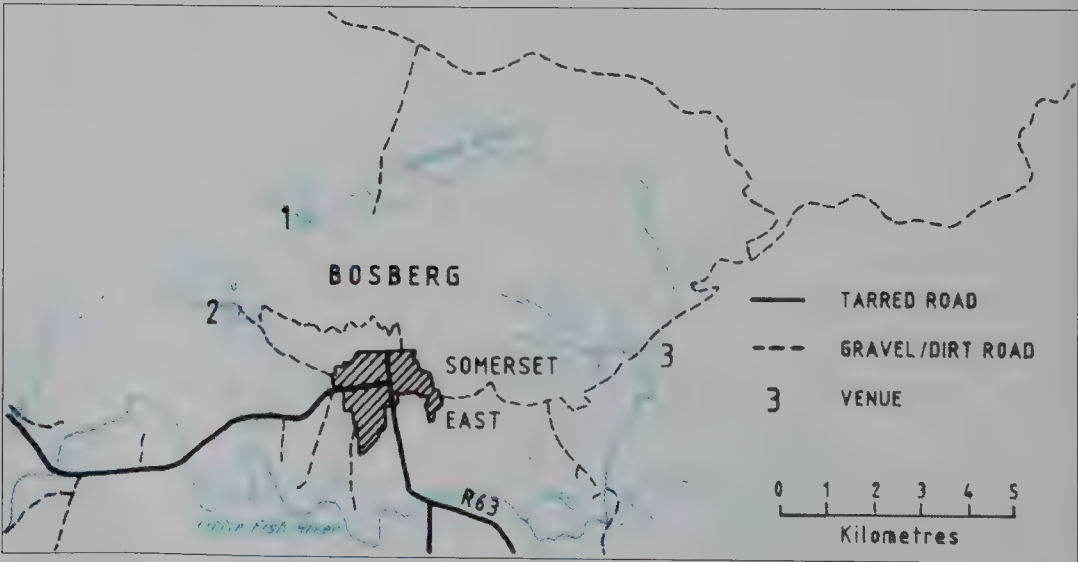


FIGURE 14: TROUT WATERS IN THE VICINITY OF SOMERSET EAST

By Brian von Holdt



SOMERSET EAST LIES AT THE FOOT OF THE Great Escarpment that extends eastward across the Karoo and, climatically, it is a remarkable study in contrasts. Arid Karoo-type plains dotted with low koppies stretch away to the south whereas to the north, the evergreen afforested slopes of the Bosberg rise abruptly from the plains for almost 800 metres to an eventual altitude of 1600 metres (**Figure 14**). The grassland plateau on top of the Bosberg receives between 500 and 800 millimetres of rain annually, mostly from summer thunderstorms, but also from regular winter snowfalls and sleet. The town is situated 25 kilometres west of the N10 from Port Elizabeth to Middelburg and is reached via the R63.

The Bankberg Troutfishers Club with membership drawn from all over the Eastern Cape, controls and manages the fishing in various stillwaters in the district. Two substantial reservoirs are open to flyfishing by the general public. The 20-hectare Mountain Dam, atop the Bosberg plateau, lies at an altitude of about 1500 metres whereas the 4-hectare Bestershoek Reservoir on the outskirts of town is 848 metres above sea level. Both dams are stocked with rainbow and brown trout and a daily bag limit of two fish applies. Float-tubes or kick-boats are permitted. The best times to fish the area are in spring and autumn. Daily rod permits, costing R25,00, and a set of directions to reach the dams may be obtained at the Lord Charles Somerset Restaurant in Charles Street. Access to Mountain Dam is controlled by means of a locked gate. A key, on which a refundable deposit is payable, can also be obtained from the restaurant.

## MOUNTAIN DAM (1)

Midges and mayflies hatch periodically on the Mountain Dam at which time size 16 to 22 nymphs fished just below the surface are effective. Generally, Mrs Simpsons, Woolly Buggers, Damselfly Nymphs and various attractor patterns fished deep, bring results. Fish up to 2,6 kilograms have been taken from this dam.

## BESTERSHOEK DAM (2)

This water holds some very big fish and, on the whole, it is best fished from a float-



tube. Nymphing on the bottom is the most successful strategy here. Bestershoek has yielded rainbows to 3 kilogram and more and it also holds some big brown trout.

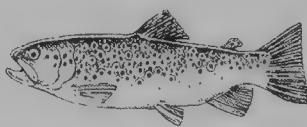
#### **GLEN AVON (3)**

This farm, situated about 7 kilometres east of the town, has three attractive dams stocked with rainbow trout. Non-club members may fish these dams at a daily rod fee of R25,00 per angler provided they make use of the bed-and-breakfast facilities on offer. Telephone Bill or Alison Brown at (0424) 33628 for bookings and information. There are no official guides in the area but information on all local trout angling may be obtained from either of the following:

Gerhard Du Preez, : (0424) 31105(o/h) or (0424) 31600(a/h)

Johnny Triegaardt, : (0424) 72135.

Visitors to Somerset East may choose from a variety of accommodation. In town, in addition to hotels, there is Paulet House, Tel. (0424) 32079, a bed-and-breakfast establishment, as well as six 2-bedded luxury furnished units available from Jacques Restaurant, Tel. (0424) 33552. Out near Bestershoek Dam, the Municipality has four 4-bedded fully furnished self-catering chalets in the forest as well as a caravan park and campsite. For information and reservations phone (0424) 31333. Outside Somerset East, in close proximity to fishing water, Avon Heights, Tel. (0424) 33555, offers bed-and-breakfast accommodation in a farm cottage whereas a self-catering cottage is available on Charlton, Tel. (0424) 3356.



### **SPRINGHOLM - TROUT FISHING - B&B**

Centrally positioned in the Natal Midlands - Approximately an hour from Durban, 4 hours from Johannesburg. Only 4 km off the N3 - Mt. West Nottingham Road exit. Excellent dam fishing with record catches - day fishermen welcome. River fishing can be arranged for B&B guests. Picnic baskets and dinner on request.

**Contact the Jonssons at: Tel: (0333) 36342 or Fax: (0333) 36074**

By Ed Herbst



THE CAPE PISCATORIAL SOCIETY was granted administrative control of angling in the Bain's Kloof, Du Toits Kloof and Stettyns Kloof Mountain catchment areas in 1993. The most popular trout rivers in these catchments are the Elandspad and Smalblaar Rivers in Du Toits Kloof on the N1 highway between Paarl and Worcester, the Holsloot River in the adjoining Stettynskloof River valley and the Witte River in Bain's Kloof between Wellington and Ceres (**Figure 15**). All these rivers are divided into beats, which are numbered consecutively upstream, and are booked through the CPS. An administrative fee is charged for this service.

The stream-fishing season extends from 1st September to 31st May which allows the fish to breed undisturbed during the closed season. Moreover, the rainy season in the Cape usually starts in late autumn and during the winter months the rivers are too high to fish safely. The best months on most rivers are from mid-October to mid-December and again from mid-March to mid-May, particularly after a light fall of rain. Fishing licences are mandatory in the Western Cape and Forestry permits are required to gain access to the various trout streams. The daily bag limit is two fish, not less than 23 centimetres in length, except on the Witte which is a catch-and-release fishery. There is no official limit on the Witels but it is suggested that anglers return all fish unharmed. Any bass captured in trout waters should be killed.

#### **ELANDSPAD RIVER (1)**

This venue and the two that follow are all accessible from the N1 between Cape Town and Worcester. The Elandspad is 80 kilometres from Cape Town and parking is available on the left of the road about half a kilometre from the exit of the Huguenot Tunnel on the Worcester side. It is a rainbow trout fishery and the stream is divided into five beats of approximately a kilometre each. The top two beats are catch-and-release. The end of the top beat is about two hours' hard walk back to the parking area so allow sufficient time to make it back before dark. It would be unwise for the elderly or the unfit to attempt fishing the top beats, particularly in mid-



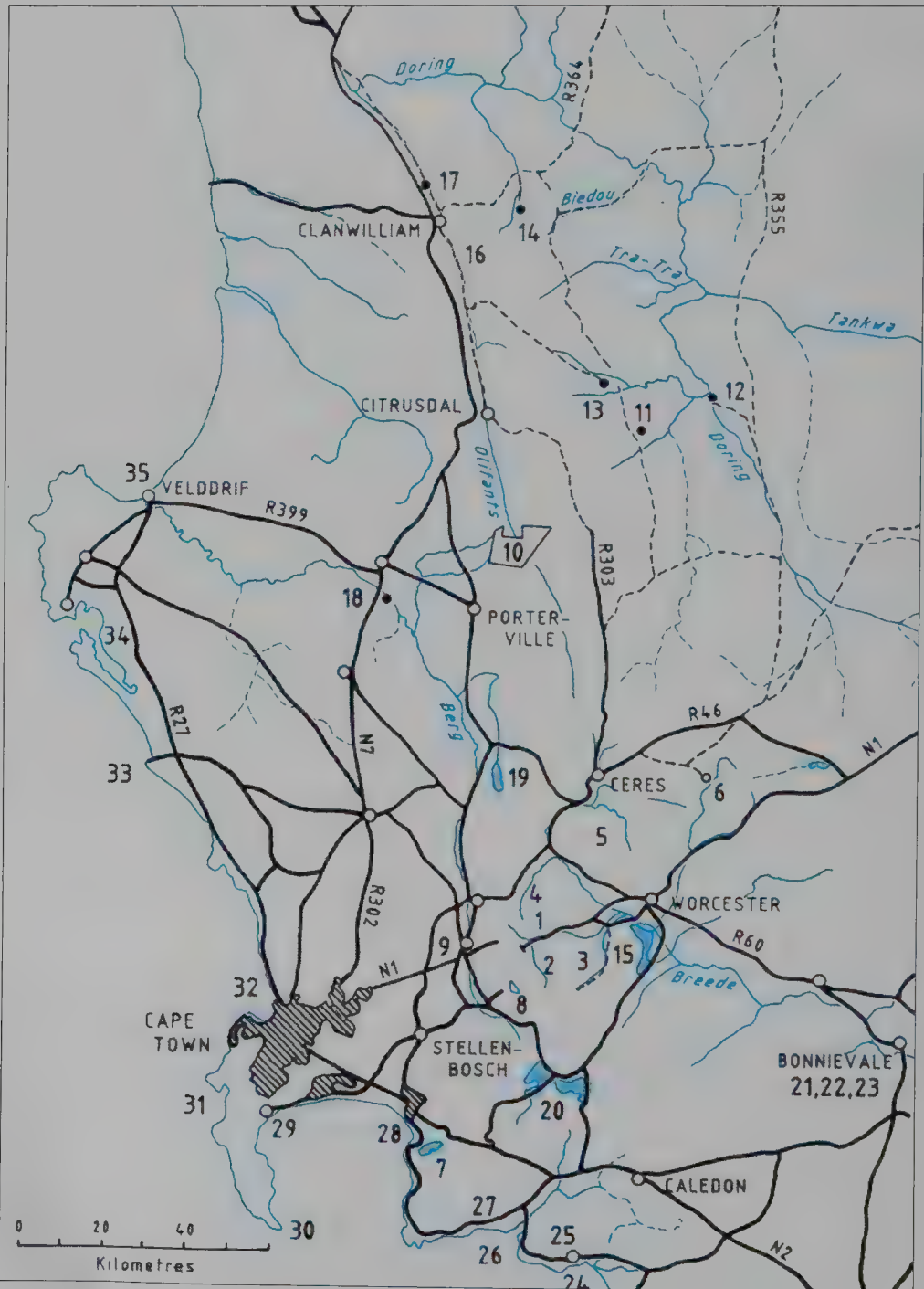


FIGURE. 15: YELLOWFISH, TROUT, BLACK BASS AND SALTWATER FISHING VENUES IN THE SOUTHWESTERN CAPE

summer. Do not forget to switch off car lights when exiting the tunnel in order to avoid a flat battery at the end of a tiring day's fishing. No fires are permitted.

**SMALBLAAR RIVER (2)**

Access and parking for beat six are the same as for the Elandspad River. Anglers may also park at the Protea Motel with the prior permission of the manager. The Smalblaar is divided into six beats of approximately a kilometre each. These beats are separated by private water belonging to the motel and to farmers. The parking areas alongside the N1 that were allocated to each beat have been changed recently. Anglers should check the locations of beats and the new parking areas beforehand with the CPS Secretary. A fee is charged to fish the motel water and this has to be arranged with the manager. Rainbow trout predominate but black bass have infiltrated the river and should be killed when captured. Overnight and picnicking facilities are available at the motel but elsewhere along the river camping, fires and dogs are not permitted.

**HOLSLOOT RIVER (3)**

The Holsloot is 124 kilometres from Cape Town. Continue along the N1 down the Du Toits Kloof valley and turn right after crossing the Smalblaar River at the bottom. After passing the Du Toits Kloof Winery on the left, look for the turn-off to Rawsonville on the right. Drive through Rawsonville and cross the two bridges over the Smalblaar and Holsloot Rivers. Shortly after crossing the second bridge turn right to Boontjiesrivier. Continue along the tarmac to where it ends at a T-junction and turn right onto a dirt road. On the farm Louwshoek you will come to a locked gate for which a key, available from the CPS Secretary, is required. From this gate the next 8 kilometres of river is on private land. The end of this private water and the start of the Forestry section are demarcated by two Forestry signposts on either side of the road. The stretch of river controlled by the CPS extends from this point up to the dam wall, which is approximately 12 kilometres from the gate. The Holsloot is essentially a rainbow trout stream with a small brown trout population. It is divided into five beats of about a kilometre each. Anglers are requested to release any brown trout caught. Permission to fish the dam may be obtained from the resident superintendent at (0231) 91298. Camping is not permitted and fires may only be lit in the designated picnic area below the dam wall. Those wishing to fish the private land



below the Forestry signs may telephone the owner at (0231) 91919. He provides comfortable accommodation in a house and a cottage on his property for those wishing to fish his section of the river.

#### **WITTE RIVER (4)**

The Wit River, more commonly known to flyfishermen as the Witte, is 100 kilometres from Cape Town in the Bain's Kloof Pass. Proceed along the N1 to the Paarl Exit and follow the R303 through Paarl and Wellington to the summit of Bain's Kloof Pass. Just before the first buildings of the small settlement, take the dirt road to the right. Drive to the end of the road and park under the trees next to the stile over the fence. The path from this stile joins up with the road to the upper Witte valley about 500 metres on. The Lower Witte, below the junction of the Baviaans Stream, has no beats. Forestry permits are, however, needed for this section as well as for the rest of the river. The kloof below the old hotel site is steep. The only good path is at the Baviaanskloof Junction Pool, 1 kilometre below the hotel. Do not park along the road in the pass. The Upper Witte, above the Baviaans Stream tributary, is divided into beats and the CPS controls access. The Witte is a brown trout fishery. Low clear water and extremely spooky fish make this the most testing water in the Western Cape. For these reasons, lightweight lines, ultra fine tippets and small flies are almost mandatory. The best months are September, October and March and April. The water level drops drastically in summer due to abstraction via the Pombers furrow to farmers in the valley below. The concomitant rise in water temperature can result in rather dour fishing from November through to February. *This is a catch-and-release fishery. Barbless hooks must be used and all fish returned unharmed.* Try to avoid handling the fish. No fires, camping or dogs allowed. Overnight and picnic facilities are available at the Tweede Tol Forestry Station. For information call the Forester at (02324) 607.

#### **WITELS RIVER (5)**

The Witels joins the Breede River in Mitchell's Pass, about 120 kilometres from Cape Town. Follow the same route as for the Witte but continue through Bain's Kloof Pass to the junction of the R303 and R43 by the Breede River. Turn left and continue along the R43 to Mitchell's Pass. The Witels is a brown trout stream. Few fish are found in the lower reaches but fishing improves the higher one goes in the kloof. The upper reaches belong to the University of Cape Town Sports Association,

and permission to fish this area must be obtained from the Association. A three-hour walk across the Skurweberg provides access to the upper Witels River. Only people who are fit and agile and suitably equipped for inclement weather, which can strike without warning and at any time, should attempt to fish the upper Witels. Anyone breaking a limb or becoming sick would need to be rescued by helicopter. The best autumn fishing is from mid-March to mid-April. Do not visit this river under any circumstances during winter as the rapid rise in river level after storms in the catchment area and the sudden onset of snow has cost several lives over the years. For this reason the University of Cape Town Sports Association forbids all access to the upper river from June to September inclusive. No fires are permitted and no dogs are allowed. Keys are needed and are obtainable from the CPS Secretary. Notify the police in Ceres if you intend to park overnight at Witels junction. Visitors to the upper Witels may park their cars at the farm Kweperfontein provided permission to enter has been obtained from the UCT Sports Association.

**FLYFISHING IN MOUNTAIN STREAMS**

Cape trout streams are usually small, shallow, crystal clear and relatively infertile. The trout they produce are accordingly comparatively small and adept at survival. Tackle and tactics must thus be adapted to a specialised task. Concealment is of paramount importance. With relatively little vegetation occurring at high altitude the angler needs to spend much time on his knees but not necessarily in prayer. False casting should be avoided, particularly over fish and their lies. Roll casts and side casts that keep the rod close to the water, rather than the normal casting style with the rod held vertically, can often pay big dividends. It pays to eschew anything bright and shiny and to tread lightly. Sound carries a long way underwater so wading should be avoided where possible. When one does have to wade – which is often – do so slowly and carefully. In New Zealand where the rivers are exceptionally clear, flyfishers wear camouflage clothing, dye their fly lines a matte colour and sandpaper the varnish from their rods to avoid rod flash when casting. These are all sound tactics. Dull-coloured lines with a matte finish specifically designed for such situations are available.

The less fly line impact there is on the water the better. Therefore, light lines and appropriate rods not only enhance one's chances of success, they also enhance the pleasure of fishing by making small trout feel like big ones. Because of their reduced





impact on the water, 2- and 3- weight lines enable one to use much shorter leaders of about two metres. These give one greater control over the fly and thus greater accuracy in casting. All fly rods, in terms of the AFTM line weight reflected on the blank, are designed to work at their optimum with 10 metres of line beyond the tip of the rod. On Cape rivers however, the average casting distance is a third of this. It pays, therefore, to use a line weight one size heavier than what the rod is designed for so that it “loads” better at this shorter range. Many skilful anglers consider a four-weight line as the very heaviest they would use on Cape streams under normal conditions.

In spring and early summer the bulk of the trout’s food in the Cape is aquatic in origin. In late summer and autumn, after the majority of aquatic insects have hatched, terrestrials such as the ubiquitous beetle and ant assume ever-greater importance, particularly after a strong wind. As most of the insects eaten by alpine trout are not longer than a centimetre, it pays to fish small patterns, say size 16 hooks or less. This has two advantages. Firstly, trout accept small patterns more readily and, secondly, very fine diameter 5X or 6X tippets best balance such flies. These tippets are less visible and more flexible thereby reducing drag and allowing the fly a life-like motion in the water.

Because the Cape streams are infertile one rarely experiences blanket hatches of insects which cause the trout to lock onto these insects selectively, refusing all but the most exact imitations. The only hatch of any importance is a tiny mayfly, *Choroterpes nigrescens*, the Darkening Dun. To match this you need a size 18 Black Parachute, an Adams, or a fore-and-aft fly with a black or blue-dun hackle at the eye and bend of the hook and a black thread body – what the British flyfishers call a “Knotted Midge”. Such small flies can prove difficult to see and the answer is to use a small yarn strike indicator. An Adams in sizes 14 to 18 serves to imitate most of the other mayfly hatches whereas a small Royal Wulff is a good attractor dry fly. In the late afternoon and early evening, when sedges and moths start appearing, a small Elk-hair Caddis is well worth trying. Other dry flies which have proved to be very effective on Cape streams are the RAB, Caribou Spider, Rat-faced McDougal and terrestrial patterns such as Hoppers, Foam Beetles and Ants. Occasionally, after the first winter rains, nuptial flights of ants will literally carpet the water with their bodies. Without a few

ant imitations of various sizes you could experience the frustration of seeing the water boiling with fish which studiously ignore your fly. Generally speaking Cape streams are fished upstream with small flies and light tippets. However to stick rigidly to a single method can prove disadvantageous. Flyfishing, like any other endeavour, is always evolving and the most successful angler is the versatile angler, one who adapts his tactics according to conditions, and is not hidebound by convention. When the rivers run high in early September and, after the first winter rains, in late May, wading can be dangerous and casting upstream futile, because the rushing water sweeps your fly back to you almost faster than you can strip in line. It is also pointless to use light tippets, so, under these circumstances, the answer is to face across the river and 'highstick' a big, heavily weighted nymph imitation on a short line from the bank. Direct your nymph round the base of big rocks, against the bank and anywhere else where it looks as though there might be shelter for the trout from the current. This requires a longer and heavier rod than is used under low-flow conditions. The dry-fly angler need not despair in such circumstances however – trout often move closer to the bank where the water is shallower and the flow less tumultuous. A large-hackled variant dry fly such as the RAB can work wonders under these circumstances, particularly if a little movement is imparted to the fly from time to time.

Western Cape streams have stone bottoms, and you are wading on what amounts to a bed of football-size boulders. This can be very painful unless your feet are adequately protected with boots that give you the maximum level of grip. Local flyfishers have found that the Beier Bova boot, similar to the one worn by local police forces, affords the best compromise between lightness, protection and grip. The Cape kloofs with their rocky sides and bottoms generate considerable heat and it is essential not to become dehydrated. A good way to avoid this is to put a few fruit juice cartons in the freezer overnight before fishing. Once frozen solid they remain cold for much of the day and also serve to keep any other drinks chilled for a longer period. If necessary, wet your hat regularly throughout the day to help you keep cool. Polaroid sunglasses are a must as they not only enable you to follow your fly by cutting the glare off the water but are also almost essential in helping you to spot fish. By the same token the weather in the kloofs can change very quickly so it pays to carry



a balaclava and a lightweight rain jacket. Wear lightweight, quick-drying cotton pants rather than denim jeans which are heavy when wet and are slow to dry. Although there has been only one recorded instance of a flyfisher being bitten by a snake on Cape streams, it pays to be careful. Puffadders are the greatest danger because they are slow moving and rely on their protective camouflage rather than flight to avoid danger. Always be careful where you tread. This is easy to forget when you are moving through thick bush and looking upwards as you thread your delicate carbon-fibre rod through the branches. Water prevents snakes from picking up the vibrations of your approach so take care and give the branches a good rattle before stepping out of a stream.

The following stillwaters are open to fishing all year round but Provincial angling licences are required as well as access permits.

#### **LAKENSVLEI DAM (6)**

This 84 -hectare dam is 200 kilometres from Cape Town. Drive to Ceres and then take the road to Sutherland. About 10 kilometres from Ceres turn right at the Lakensvlei signpost. The dam has a maximum depth of 30 metres and a pH of 6.5. It is stocked with rainbow and brown trout and the best months to fish for them are April to July and October. Trout up to 2 kilograms have been caught here and they are very strong, so ensure that you have adequate backing. The daily bag limit is four fish not less than 35 centimetres. Float-tubes and boats are allowed but no motors of any kind. Keys and permits are required and are available from the CPS Secretary. Anglers may camp at the access gate provided prior permission has been obtained from the farmer.

#### **STEENBRAS DAM (7)**

Take the N2 highway from Cape Town to the top of Sir Lowry's Pass. Proceed for 200 metres past the summit and turn right at the entrance to Steenbras Dam. The distance from Cape Town is 55 kilometres. The dam can also be reached from Gordon's Bay. Follow the coastal road towards Betty's Bay and Hangklip for 4 kilometres, then turn left at the signpost. Steenbras has a surface area of 400 hectares and a maximum depth of 23 metres. The pH is 6. It is stocked with rainbows, browns and smallmouth bass and the daily bag limit per person is ten fish not less than 23 centimetres. The best months to fish are from April to November. Fishing is

permitted along virtually the entire bank on the Cape Town (north) side of both the top and bottom dams, and also from the lower dam wall to Koegel Stream. The only portion of the stretch on the Cape Town side that is not accessible to the public is the intake works on the upper dam. This no-go area is clearly signposted. No craft are allowed. In Cape Town, permits for entry to Steenbras Dam are obtainable from the Civic Centre, the Long Street Swimming Bath and the Newlands Swimming Bath. They may also be purchased at the Municipal Offices in Strand. The cost is R5,00 per person and there is no charge for cars. Permits are valid from 08:00 to 19:00 from 1st November to 31st March and from 08:00 to 17:00 from 1st April to 31st October. No fires, dogs or swimming are allowed at the Steenbras Dam.

**WEMMERSHOEK DAM (8)**

Wemmershoek Dam is 75 kilometres from Cape Town. Take the N1 to Paarl then the Wemmershoek off-ramp on the Paarl - Franschoek road. After 12 kilometres you reach the turn-off which is clearly signposted. Drive to the first gate. Here you must hand in your permits and sign the book. Drive to the second gate at the dam wall where a second book must be signed and you will receive an entry permit to the ring road around the dam. Your CPS permit must be produced at this gate. *It is important to note that entry and angling permits are not obtainable at the dam itself.* The 296-hectare dam has a maximum depth of 55 metres and a pH of 6.5. It is stocked with rainbow trout and the best time to fish for them is from April to October. Research by Cape Nature Conservation has shown that in summer the trout are found as deep as 55 metres feeding on bloodworm. Cold, rainy days with a high barometer are generally the most productive. The daily bag limit is 10 fish not less than 26 centimetres in length. No fishing is permitted downstream of the notice boards on the north and south banks. Fishing is only allowed along the perimeter of the dam and entering the remainder of the catchment area is prohibited. No fires may be lit and no dogs are allowed. From 1st November to 31st March the dam is open between 08:00 and 19:00 and from 1st April to 31st October between 08:00 and 17:00.

**PAARL MOUNTAIN DAMS (9)**

Take the N1 to Paarl and as you enter the main road take the turning to the left marked Jan Philips Mountain Drive, which leads to the three municipal dams. Bethel (18 hectares and 19 metres deep) and Victoria are stocked with rainbow trout whereas





Nantes (17 hectares and 19 metres deep) contains rainbows as well as smallmouth. The water in all three dams is neutral with a pH of 7. The best fishing months are April to November and six fish not less than 30 centimetres may be kept. Permits are available from the CPS or the Paarl Municipal Offices in Berg River Boulevard. Fires may be lit at the picnic spot next to the wild flower garden but no overnight camping is allowed. Gates are open between 07:00 and 17:00.

### **FLYFISHING IN CAPE STILLWATERS**

All the dams above have good populations of crabs, frogs, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs so flies such as Walker's Killers, Mrs. Simpson, Woolly Worm as well as dragonfly and damselfly nymph imitations fished on sinking or intermediate lines are popular and effective. In late afternoon fish move into the shallows and provide sport on floating lines. Indigenous *Galaxias* minnows are prevalent in the Steenbras and Wemmershoek Dams and a selection of small imitative streamers should be included in the fly selection. Stillwater flyfishers are finding increasingly that trout accept small flies with greater confidence so small Hare's Ears and Pheasant Tail Nymphs would probably work as well if not better than the popular patterns. Experiments with small dry flies, using the "heave-it-and-leave-it" technique are also proving successful. On calm days and depending on whether the angler is fishing from the bank or from a float-tube (where permitted) 4- or 5- weight outfits should suffice. [*Bear in mind, however, that in the Southwestern Cape, the choice of tackle is often determined not by the size of the fish but by the size of the wind.* THE EDITOR.]

### **FACILITIES AND INFORMATION**

Fortunately for visitors to the Western Cape virtually all information necessary for flyfishing in both fresh and salt water can be obtained from the Cape Piscatorial Society. The CPS is unique among South African angling clubs in that it has full-time, salaried staff and does not function solely for the benefit of its members but provides a service to the public as well. In fact, it runs its offices in the Cape Town CBD as a free information service. Fully fifty percent of the telephone calls received and visits to the club premises are from non-members. Whereas the CPS does not have the funds to post out written material, members of the public are welcome to visit the clubrooms for reference purposes. Its angling library is probably the finest in Africa and contains books dating from the late eighteenth century. This service is

gratefully acknowledged, albeit not in any financial way, by tourist organisations such as Captour, Satour and travel agencies that refer visiting anglers to the CPS for assistance. It must be stressed that the Society does not own any water to which its members have exclusive access and to which it would deny access to members of the public. All visiting flyfishers are welcome to fish the water under its jurisdiction on a first-come-first-served basis and the CPS staff will be only too happy to assist in the acquisition of licences and Forestry permits and give advice on where the best fishing can be found. To this end the Society has produced a publication, "Some Flyfishing Waters of the Cape" which contains detailed maps of every river and stillwater of any flyfishing significance in the Western Cape which are not under private ownership. This book has been available to both Society members and the public for several years now and is presently being updated. The Society is located on the fourth floor of the Mercantile Building (above City Guns) in Hout Street and is open to visitors between 10:00 and 16:00 on weekdays. The telephone number is (021) 24-7725 and the fax (021) 24-5602. Membership details are available from the secretary at the numbers above.

The Western Cape is renowned worldwide as a tourist destination and, consequently, there is a great variety of accommodation. Prospective visitors can obtain all necessary information by calling Captour at (021) 418-5214 in Cape Town.



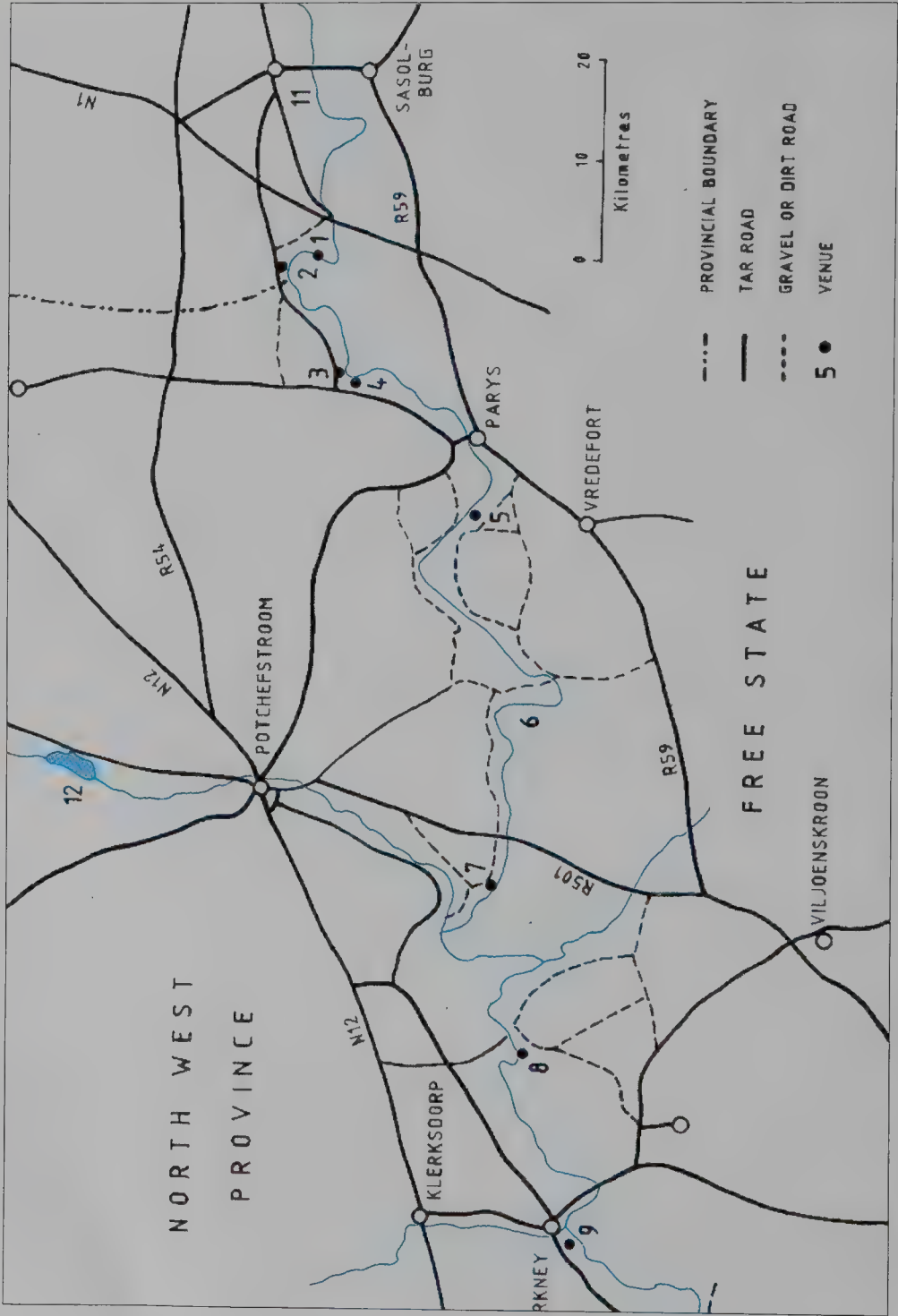


FIGURE 16: YELLOWFISH VENUES ON THE VAAL RIVER BETWEEN THE BARRAGE AND ORKNEY



**M**

ANY ANGLERS RATE THE SMALLMOUTH YELLOWFISH

(*Barbus aeneus*) as the king of light-tackle gamefish in South Africa for he combines power and speed with a wariness that challenges the most skilful fishermen. Among non-competitive freshwater bait-fishermen yellowfish are probably the most sought-after gamefish and by far the greatest number are captured on bait. They have, however, been taken sporadically on fly since the turn of the century and, more recently, artificial lure anglers have also developed successful techniques to catch them. Anglers such as Bennion in the twenties and Loftie Biermann in the seventies foreshadowed the upsurge in the popularity of the smallmouth as a fly-rod quarry, for they were instrumental in developing the flyfishing techniques for yellows that are still current. But if there is one man who really deserves the credit for putting smallmouth yellowfish on the front page of the flyfishing world it must be Theo van Niekerk. His dogged perseverance with the fly rod on the Vaal and his serendipitous design of a unique fly, the TVN, coupled with a general increase in the popularity of flyfishing in the early eighties, have resulted in the establishment of a sport which today has many hundreds of adherents.

The smallmouth yellowfish is endemic to the Vaal-Orange catchment area but interbasinal transfer of water has resulted in the extension of their range into the Indian Ocean drainage basin. It is an omnivorous species that feeds on vegetation, small fish, aquatic and terrestrial insects, bivalves, crustaceans, frogs and worms. During winter food intake decreases drastically, the fish become virtually dormant and catching them by any legitimate means is very difficult. So, traditionally, the warmer months – those containing the letter “r” -- have been considered to be the best time to fish for smallmouth yellowfish. Certainly, studies have shown that during October the fish’s metabolism starts increasing rapidly and, on the Vaal River, this coincides with the commencement of the prime angling period that will last to March or April. Nonetheless, fish can be, and are, taken on fly in the winter months.





Over on the Klip River tributary, persevering anglers extract a few fish occasionally and Loftie Biermann tells me that on warm and calm winter afternoons on the Vaal, smallmouth will start to rise to a hatch of chironomid midges or “muggies”. When this happens they can be induced to take a small parachute-hackled dry fly. Horst Filter who fishes the rivers of southeastern Mpumalanga actually catches most of his fish, albeit a different and supposedly warmer water species, in winter in water temperatures similar to those in the Vaal. He does not fish the same type of water as we do and his technique is somewhat different but it makes me wonder whether we are not missing out on a good thing by not adapting his methods to the Vaal in winter.

By October the yellowfish are moving into the shallow riffles, runs and flats to feed on the many insects and other food forms that are now also becoming active and also to prepare for spawning. Look for moderately fast water flowing over cobbles and boulders and ranging in depth from mid-calf to about mid-thigh. The surface is characterised by small pointed standing waves that result in a “bouncy” or choppy surface. Riffles alternate with or grade into runs that are deeper and have a smoother surface. Flats have a substrate of mixed sand and gravel usually with a lot of trailing weed or watergrass and a smooth and slower current. These water types harbour a great variety of food forms and the fish frequent them all summer long during daylight hours. To maximise his chances of success the flyfisherman in pursuit of smallmouth should focus on these specific areas. Unfortunately the prime time for yellows also coincides with the height of the rainy season and, in years of normal to heavy rainfall, rivers may be discoloured and unfishable for weeks on end. If you can see a size 8 black fly at a depth of about 25 centimetres or more in a pocket of quiet water then visibility is adequate for flyfishing.

Dead-drifting an artificial catches most of the smallmouth yellowfish taken on flyfishing tackle in the Vaal River. Move cautiously upstream and drop your fly into potential fish-holding spots such as small flat spots in riffles, in and around large rocks, up against bankside vegetation, channels in weed beds, and so on, letting the current bring it back without drag. Use a short line – not more than 5 to 10 metres, depending on water velocity – and fish out each cast completely. An experienced trout fisherman will have little difficulty in recognising those areas where yellowfish are likely to be found as both types favour similar feeding areas. There is, however,

one major difference in the behaviour of the two fishes. Trout are more solitary and territorially orientated and tend to occupy specific but predictable localities in a stream. A known trout lie will almost invariably be taken over by another fish if the original occupant is removed. Smallmouth yellowfish, on the other hand, whether singly or gathered into small groups or shoals tend to roam around a great deal – a spot from which a fish was taken will not necessarily be occupied by another subsequently. The flow of the Vaal River below the Barrage is controlled by sluices. For wading upstream a flow rate of 7,5 to 15 cubic metres per second is comfortable. Between 15 and 20 cumecs it becomes progressively more difficult and if flow exceeds 20 cumecs don't even bother going out. Call Rand Water on (016) 87-2010 for an up-to-date report on flow rates. If unsuccessful, try the helpful folks at Water Affairs in Deneyville on (01618) 31121. Water temperatures from 20°C up are ideal.

The workhorse flies on the Vaal River are the LILY nymph and various shrimp patterns. The LILY is a more productive variant of Theo van Niekerk's original TVN and is, at present, preferred by most anglers. Generic scud and shrimp designs, or local variations such as the Vaalie Shrimp, do well, particularly around vegetation where these small crustaceans occur in their millions. Charl du Plessis' Shrimp, tied big and juicy with meteorological balloon rubber, is a proven killer and, of late, Jacques de Vos' Elgro Nymph has started making serious inroads into the yellowfish population below Schoeman's Drif. On certain days Bitch Creek Nymphs, green-bodied caddis larva imitations and gLEWurms (a modified version of the popular Woolly Worm) will take fish when other patterns fail. Be on the lookout for mayfly or caddis hatches towards evening and see if the yellows are taking them, in which case a small cream or grey dry imitation will often tempt them to strike. Although fishing upstream is the norm on the Vaal River, do not be blinded by convention. Innovative anglers are always observant and prepared to adapt to changing conditions. If the upstream method does not produce or if you are working a run with a uniform flow, try fishing down and across. An experienced angler like Loftie Biermann uses this technique almost exclusively and, on several occasions, a big bushy fly fished down and across at dusk has saved the day for me. Most of the flies mentioned are available from selected flyfishing shops. Flatten the barbs with a pair of pliers before you start fishing to facilitate removing the hook. Even so you will be surprised to



find that a barbless hook is not that easy to extract from the tough rubbery lips of a Vaal River smallmouth.

Most of us who fish for yellows prefer floating lines in the 5- to 7- weight range. A matching 2,74 metre graphite rod is a good choice as it has better line-handling qualities than a shorter rod. Although large yellowfish have been landed on lighter outfits than those recommended, I consider them inappropriate for the Vaal River. Most of us prefer to return the fish we catch unharmed. We, therefore, try to land and release them as quickly as our tackle will permit in order to minimise the stress on the fish. Rods lighter than 5 weight do not have sufficient authority to handle a large yellowfish which manages to get into fast water below the angler. Either the angler has to be exceptionally lucky, or he must face the prospect of a long fight in which he virtually worries the fish to exhaustion. *In the comparatively warm water in which we fish in summer, fish build up substantially higher levels of stress during a fight than in cold water and they require an inordinate amount of resting time to recover.* Releasing such a spent and shocked fish after a prolonged fight without an adequate revival period may be tantamount to sending it to its death and is a shameful waste of a creature which is too precious to utilise only once. A good quality single-action fly reel, capable of holding a full floating fly line and 50 to 100 metres of backing, is standard. Complete the outfit with a 3-metre leader tapering to a 3,5-kilogram point. Brightly coloured highly visible fly lines make it easier to follow the drifting fly and to detect any unusual movement that may indicate a take. A small fluorescent coloured float, also known as a strike-indicator, may be attached to the leader for the same purpose. It is a particularly useful device for the beginning angler and will assist him in developing the necessary ability to detect subtle takes. A deep, moderately sized net that can be suspended from the back or clipped to a belt greatly facilitates landing and releasing fish. Fishing the stony-bottomed Vaal River in midsummer is much more comfortable if you have a pair of sturdy wading shoes or boots (felt soles work best for me); a wide-brimmed hat; dark glasses (preferably polarised) and a high-factor sunblock lotion.

Smallmouth yellowfish can be caught on fly wherever suitable conditions exist on the Vaal, the Orange or their tributaries. Little is known of the flyfishing potential of the Orange River because outside Lesotho it tends to be muddy for much of the summer. The Vaal has excellent spots from the Barrage all the way down to its

confluence with the Orange. Information on access and accommodation between Orkney and Warrenton is, however, scant. For anglers from the Witwatersrand and Pretoria the N1 motorway provides the quickest and easiest access to the following five venues (**Figure 16**). Exit at the Potchefstroom-Vanderbijlpark interchange and turn west along the tarred road.

**GEELVIS PARADYS (1)**

Turn left onto a gravel road 6,7 kilometres from the interchange and continue on it for 1,2 kilometres, then turn right onto a farm road and follow the signposts for a further 1,6 kilometres. The river is about 200 to 250 metres wide at this site and studded with numerous islands. The nicest stretches of runs and riffles are located towards the Free State side and a short distance downstream from the farmhouse. A camping and caravan site has been established and an ablution block was in the final stages of completion at the time of writing (November 1997). Day visitors are provided with piped water, braai facilities and two pit latrines. Cool drinks, ice and basic necessities can be purchased from the small farm store on site. Day permits cost R10,00 per car. Call Mr. Cronk on (016) 87-1385 for information.

**SILWERSTROME (2)**

The turn-off is to the left, 9 kilometres from the N1 interchange. The resort is situated 1,4 kilometres farther along the dirt road. Here, elongated islands split the river into 3 main channels. The channel on the Gauteng side is about 50 metres wide and includes a section of riffles, runs and some weedy flats. The second channel is about 80 metres wide and has similar water. The third channel lies along the Free State bank. The floods of the previous two summers caused extensive damage to the resort and the riverbank has not yet been fully restored. Facilities that escaped damage or have been repaired subsequently include tent and caravan sites, toilets, showers, picnic tables, drinking water taps, braais, the swimming pool and a playground for children. The daily cost is R10,00 per car and R10,00 per caravan. Phone (016) 87-2161 for more information.

**UITKYK (3)**

From the previous turn-off continue for 3 kilometres and turn left at the signpost marked Lindequesdrif. From this point it is 9,7 kilometres to the Uitkyk turn-off on the left. The resort is less than 1 kilometre down the dirt road. This is





mostly slow, deep water but at the downstream end of the property, around a few islands, a stretch of about 150 metres of riffly water is suitable for flyfishing. Accommodation, tenting and caravan sites are available as well as a central ablution block, tuck shop, covered braai area, swimming pool, children's playground and picnic sites with individual braais for day visitors. Since the previous edition a recreation hall, bar and a fast-food take-away facility have been established. Six of the chalets can accommodate six persons apiece and the remaining four can sleep four persons in each. Day ticket costs R8,00 per car plus R5,00 per person. For details phone (0568) 4110.

#### **EENDEKUIL (4)**

From the Uitkyk turn-off drive west for 1,7 kilometres to the intersection with the R500 between Fochville and Parys. Turn left for 900 metres and then left again onto a dirt road at the Eendekuil signpost. This is a popular venue with many flyfishers. Scattered islands split the river into several channels with riffly water occurring over a distance of about 300 metres. The facilities are fairly basic and are limited to outside toilets, tapped water and an ablution block. Camping is permitted. The daily entry fee is R10.00 per car. For information call (0568) 4096.

#### **DIMALACHITE (5)**

This resort lies on the Free State side of the Vaal River. From Parys follow the R59 towards Vredefort for approximately 4 kilometres to a signpost marked Schoemansdrif and turn right. Continue along the dirt road for 2,5 kilometres and take the fork to the right. The entrance to Dimalachite is 3,4 kilometres further on and is clearly signposted. There is a rather short stretch of suitable water at the upstream end of the property. For the rest the river here is mostly deep and slow. Self-catering chalets and caravan and tenting sites are available as well as a central ablution block, swimming pool, children's play park, picnic sites and a hiking trail. The resort provides an extensive program of entertainment for the non-angling members of the family, including river rafting, bumper boats and 4-wheeled motor cycles. Daily entry costs are R15.00 per person. For further details phone (056) 931-0033.

#### **SCHOEMANSDRIF AREA (6)**

Molapo Safaris and Outdoor Adventures runs a guided canoeing cum fishing

operation on the Vaal that commences at the bridge at Schoemansdrif and terminates downstream at Elgro Lodge, a well-stocked game farm and resort. The length of river traversed in this manner is 11 kilometres and covers some excellent flyfishing water. The full trip lasts about a day but anglers who do not wish to cover the entire stretch can arrange to commence or discontinue the float at intermediate points. The operators know the fish and know the river and the service is highly professional. Elgro Lodge provides accommodation in three luxury self-contained units sleeping five each or in a refurbished farmhouse that can accommodate fifteen. Basic accommodation is available on an adjoining farm. The section of river around Elgro Lodge itself offers excellent flyfishing and the owners encourage catch-and-release. Full conference facilities and other activities are available and catering is undertaken on request. Call Piet Goosen at (0148) 297-6290 for complete details.

**OORD NEBO (7)**

Anglers from the Witwatersrand and Pretoria should proceed to Potchefstroom and from there along route 501 to Viljoenskroon as far as the bridge over the Vaal at Skandinawiëdrif. Just before the bridge turn right onto the gravel road for about 6 kilometres to the Nebo signpost and turn left into the property. At the time of writing Nebo had just come under new management. The stretch of flyfishing water consists of 400 metres of alternating riffles, runs and pools with numerous reed-covered islands dividing the river into separate channels. Self-catering chalets equipped for 6 persons are available and there are caravan sites, a lapa, an ablution block, swimming pool, a play park and a tuck shop, as well as facilities for volleyball, jukskei and mini-golf. The entry fee is R 20.00 per car per day and full information can be obtained on (018) 291-1556.

**WAWIEL PARK (8)**

From Potchefstroom take the divided highway to Klerksdorp for 22 kilometres and turn left at the signpost marked Orkney just before the bridge. Follow this road for about 15 kilometres to a four-way stop and turn left continuing on to the Vaal River. Cross the bridge into the Free State and turn right immediately beyond the bridge. Wawiel Park is about 2 kilometres further along the dirt road. The river in front of the resort is deep and slow but a fast-water stretch, several hundred metres upstream, is suitable for flyfishing. Accommodation ranges from self-contained



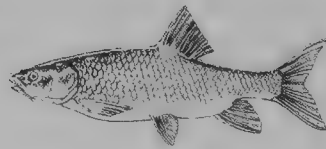
luxury chalets to rondavels and rooms served by an ablution block. A caravan and camping site is also available. Other facilities include a wavemaker swimming pool and supertube as well as a café and store. Rental canoes are available. Day visitors pay R5,00 per car and R8,00 per person. Call (018) 441-1093 or 441-1075 (office hours) for information.

#### **WINDKNOT CLUB (9)**

This flyfishing club has a lively membership and, because of its location, is largely focused on yellowfish. The home water is an excellent stretch of the Vaal River close to Orkney and the club offers day fishing facilities to visiting anglers who obtain prior permission from a committee member. Overnight facilities are no longer available. For permission to fish, information on river and fishing conditions and directions on how to reach the water phone Harvey Venter at (0148) 293-2537.

#### **IJAANI (10)**

To reach this resort follow route 502 from Orkney to Leeudoringstad. Turn left onto a gravel road at the Bothaville signpost, 21 kilometres from Orkney, and cross the bridge over the Vaal River. Turn right on the far side and follow the dirt road for a further 3 kilometres. Ijaani is well frequented by flyrodders from Klerksdorp and Orkney and some good fish are taken. The resort has a caravan and camping site, ablution block and swimming pool. For information phone (0565) 3513.



By Dennis de Klerk



**ALTHOUGH SMALLMOUTH YELLOWFISH** are native to the rivers of the Free State the clear water required to catch them on fly is a rarity. The nature of the bedrock, the soils, topography and agriculture in the Province all contribute to streams which do not clear readily after being muddied by summer rain. However, Fika Patso and Sterkfontein Dams in the Eastern Highlands (**Figure 4**) can normally be relied on to be suitable for flyfishing and capable of producing good fish. Both fisheries, which also contain trout, are controlled by the Free State Nature Conservation Department and require Free State fishing licences obtainable for R10,00 at Sterkfontein dam.

### **FIKA PATSO DAM (1)**

This reservoir and access routes to it have already been described in detail in the section “Trout in the Free State” (p. 31). Under normal conditions a 5-weight outfit will suffice but when it is windy heavier rods and lines may be necessary. Water clarity necessitates long leaders, fine tippets and extreme stealth to avoid spooking the fish. GRHE Nymphs and Flashback Olive Nymphs with bead heads in sizes 12 to 16 are effective subsurface patterns. When the fish are feeding on top try one of the following: Adams, G & H Sedge, Bicolour, DDD, Black Ant and Black Beetle patterns in sizes 12 to 16. The inlets generally provide the best fishing and particularly during the spawning season from October to February

### **STERKFORTEIN DAM (2)**

The access routes and fish species in Sterkfontein Dam have already been described on page 34. Yellowfish normally spawn on gravel beds in clear running streams but those in Sterkfontein spawn in the wave action on gravel beds on the eastern shores. The shoals are 100 metres long by 3 metres wide and seeing the fish when they are spawning is a never forgotten experience. Site fishing in beautiful clear water needs extreme caution and a light touch is essential or else you will be left with a broken tippet. As long as you have enough backing and can cast to the fish any tackle in the 2- to 6- weight range can be used. Small Olive Flashbacks, Beadheads and GRHE Nymphs in sizes 16 to 18 cast just short of the spawning fish in shallow





water normally results in a massive strike and run. Dry flies that are normally fished effectively in the turbulence along the shoreline include the Adams, DDD, Elkhair Caddis, G & H Sedge, Light Cahill as well as Black Beetle or Black Ant patterns in sizes 12 to 16. It is worthwhile drifting a slightly, GRHE, Olive Flashback, Pheasant Tail, Black-and-Peacock Spider or Zulu in sizes 10 to 14 over the drop-off at the edge of the gravel bed. The best fishing is from November to March. Information about the reserve, the dam, accommodation and bookings can be obtained by calling (05861) 23520. For guide services try Dennis de Klerk on 083 227 6328.



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By Charl du Plessis



**M**

ENTION THE NORTHERN CAPE and most people visualise a hot arid semi-desert. To a certain extent this may be true, as the province includes the Kalahari Desert in the north, the Karoo in the south and Namaqualand in the west. Few people will ever associate the province with flyfishing. However, the two largest rivers in South Africa, the Vaal and the Orange flow through the region and those in the know have discovered, in this unlikely area, what must be the finest flyfishing for yellowfish in the world. Both the smallmouth and the largemouth yellowfish are relatively abundant in the Northern Cape. The largemouth has become somewhat of a rarity and a threatened species in most parts of its range, but locally it is still fairly common. It is not without reason that its scientific name is *Barbus Kimberleyensis*, as Kimberley is the capital of the province and the nearby Vaal River is the place where this specie is most abundant.

Because of its scarcity elsewhere and also because it can grow into the largest scale-bearing freshwater gamefish in South Africa, I have found that the largemouth has acquired somewhat of a glamour status among anglers. Doubtless it is a fine fish to catch on a fly rod but in my opinion the fighting qualities of the largemouth cannot begin to compare with those of the smallmouth. It is certainly the faster of the two species and takes the fly with a terrific rush. Some even jump on being hooked, especially in shallow water, but it lacks the stamina and sheer guts of the smallmouth. If the angler can survive that first headlong charge the battle is usually halfway won. The smallmouth, on the other hand, is not quite as fast but it simply does not know when to surrender. It fights long and hard to the bitter end and I am convinced that if a smallmouth could speak, it would still be swearing at you after being landed. I would estimate that in the Northern Cape the ratio of largemouth to smallmouth caught is close to fifty-fifty. During October and November, at the start of the season, and again in April, towards the end, at least half of the yellows caught are largemouth.

The section of the Vaal River under discussion starts at Warrenton in the east and flows for approximately 250 kilometres to its confluence with the Orange River near Douglas. As can be expected the nature of the river varies considerably over



such a long distance, with stretches of deep pools alternating with others of rocky shallows and rapids. Generally speaking the Vaal in this region is a very different river from the Vaal between the Barrage and Orkney. For a start it has nowhere near the volume of water during “normal” periods. This is because huge quantities of water are abstracted for irrigation and other purposes all the way from Gauteng to the Northern Cape border. Downstream of Barkly West, there are many places where one can easily cast clear across the river with a fly rod when it is at its normal level. There are even places where athletic types can jump across. Another interesting feature of the Vaal River in the Northern Cape is the alluvial diamond mining that has been going on all along its course for more than a hundred years. In some places, notably between Barkly West and Delporthoop, some of these diggings are still going strong. The result is that the riverbed is full of all types of interesting holes, rockpiles and cofferdams that provide cover and holding areas for the fish. They also present very interesting wading conditions for unwary flyfishers and can cause you to take an unplanned swim to the vast amusement of your fishing buddies and onlookers.

The Orange River is a totally different kettle of fish to the Vaal. The flow is very much higher and it is difficult to wade. Moreover, long stretches of the river are fringed by dense reedbeds making access difficult. The water is also generally murky but it does contain lots of yellowfish. I do not have much first-hand knowledge of flyfishing in the Orange, but I think the best time to attempt it would be in the spring when the river is relatively low and clear. I gave one of my friends a few flies and he reported catching a lot of nice yellows in the Prieska area. I fished the Orange once, in the vicinity of Onseepkans during early winter when conditions were far from ideal. Nonetheless, I managed to catch five or six smallmouth yellows that looked as if they had been taking anabolic steroids. They were big thickset fish with small heads and they fought like the devil. Flyfishing in the Orange River is definitely unexplored and wide open for experimentation. The potential is almost unlimited because there are long stretches where fish must die of old age for lack of fishing pressure. The section from the Augrabies Falls to the sea, is especially interesting, with lots of fish, spectacular scenery and almost zero fishermen. A float trip down a stretch of this river at the right time of the year ought to be an unforgettable adventure for flyfishermen with a bit of pioneering spirit.

One of the important factors affecting flyfishing in the Northern Cape is the weather. This region becomes extremely hot in the summer and people unfamiliar with the conditions tend to underestimate the intensity of the sun. I have seen keen flyfishermen have their entire trip ruined on the first day by sunburn. Temperatures of 40°C are not uncommon along the Vaal and reach as high as 45° C along the lower Orange River. I would recommend that anglers wear light long-sleeved shirts, long trousers (not denims, which are too heavy when wet), wide-brimmed hats and plenty of sunscreen lotion on exposed skin. Water temperatures may reach 27° C and, not only do the yellowfish like it, it also means waders are totally unnecessary. The riverbed in this area is sandy in many places so a pair of old jogging shoes provides sufficient foot protection. A wading staff is also very handy. I have noticed lately in certain flyfishing magazines that wearing a red neckerchief seems to be mandatory. I should mention that in the Northern Cape this is optional.

Just how good is the flyfishing along the lower Vaal River and how many fish can a person expect to catch? The answer to this question is that this region, like any other, also has its ups and downs. During a severe drought the river may actually stop flowing altogether and then fishing is a waste of time. Likewise, at times of flood fishing is hopeless. At the time of writing (June 1997) the river has been in flood since November 1996 due to the exceptional rains in the catchment area. In contrast, in 1995, after a long drought the river was so overgrown with weeds that fishing was virtually impossible. When, however, conditions are favourable – and they often are – flyfishing can be fantastic. I have done most of my flyfishing for the past eleven years at Schmidtsdrift. On many occasions I could have caught sixty or seventy yellowfish in a day, not counting the “kapentas” of less than half a kilogram, and including several fish of 3 kilograms or more. The limiting factors to the number of fish caught are the time taken to land large specimens and the fact that you get tired from casting to and fighting them. I can remember one day when Theo van Niekerk and I were standing approximately twenty meters apart and each of us caught about fifteen yellowfish without moving a step. When conditions are right at Schmidtsdrift (usually in October or early November) the water is as clear as a mountain stream in the Boland. Then you can walk along the bank and see schools of fish swimming a metre below the surface. You select your target, cast to it and watch as it inhales the





fly. Believe me, fishing under these conditions is pure undiluted heaven on earth. Unfortunately it spoils you for fishing under less productive circumstances and it takes a blank day, which invariably occurs sooner or later, to bring you back to earth with a bang. The largest yellowfish that I have personally caught on fly tackle in the Northern Cape was approximately 10 kilograms. Fish of this size, however, are extremely rare and likely to be a once-in-a-lifetime catch. Perhaps a better measure of the potential of this region is the fact that over a period of eleven years I have managed to catch five yellows which exceeded the 7-kilogram mark. Fish of 2 kilograms are common and I would say that an average flyfisherman could expect to catch fish of 3 to 4 kilograms fairly regularly. The lower Vaal River also has huge numbers of carp (also known as sewerage trout). Some of them are enormous and occasionally they take a fly if you present it close to their mouths. They put up a prolonged but not spectacular fight. Carp anglers will think they are in seventh heaven if they could just see the numbers of fish in certain pools.

Northern Cape yellows are not very selective or choosy about flies but some patterns generally perform more consistently than others. Among those that I can recommend are the TVN, shrimp imitations, Muddler Minnows and dragonfly or damselfly nymph imitations. For the last seven or eight years I have used three flies for 90% of my fishing. The first is a shrimp imitation that I tie using latex strips cut from a weather balloon. It looks more like a mud prawn than a shrimp but the yellowfish love it. Pete Immelman started tying it commercially and sold it under the name of Charl's Shrimp. I have never tried Pete's replica, so I cannot say how effective it is. Dry flies work very well in our area and the second pattern that I use regularly is a black foam rubber cricket imitation. The third fly is a streamer that I devised specifically for largemouth yellowfish. When I started fishing it I found the fly worked equally well for smallmouth. It is also murder on trout and I am sure it will be effective on other gamefish species. When Theo van Niekerk first saw this fly he named it the "Krismisboom" (Christmas Tree) because it is tied, Thunder Creek style, of metallic threads unravelled from lamé material. It has a lovely pulsating action in the water and it can be stripped in like any other streamer or drifted in the current like a nymph.

I cannot add much to what has already been said in a preceding chapter about the tactics and techniques involved in catching yellowfish. Although we generally fish for yellows in the shallow rapids, a few of us gave the deep pools a go a year or two ago and to our superlative surprise we caught a lot of yellowfish. Largemouth, especially, seem to take a fly quite readily in deep water but appear to be somewhat more structure orientated, so concentrate on areas next to reedbeds, trees, rocks in the water and so on. I suppose one may infer that when yellowfish are in the shallows they are almost always there to feed and for that reason are likely to hit a fly. Those in the deep pools are not necessarily in a feeding mood, but may grab a bite if the opportunity presents itself.

Flyfishermen are advised to bring along all the tackle they need, as there are no shops specialising in this sort of gear in the Northern Cape. Also remember that towns are few and far between so stock up with the necessary requirements before going to the river. The towns along the Vaal, from east to west are Warrenton, Windsorton (very small), Barkly West, Delporthoop and Douglas. Kimberley is about 35 kilometres from the river but is probably the best place to purchase your requirements. I am unaware of any boats for hire along the Vaal River in this region so bring your own.

#### **FOURTEEN STREAMS**

This area is just below the weir that diverts water from the river into the canal system of the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme. It is about 10 kilometres east of Warrenton on the N12 and the turn-off to the weir is clearly marked. It is fine water for flyfishing

#### **WARRENTON**

The river above and below the low-water bridge to Jan Kempdorp can be fished with a fair chance of success. There is a caravan park next to the river. Between Warrenton and Windsorton the river runs through private farmland but it is very good water if you can obtain permission to fish it.

#### **RIVERTON**

About 10 kilometres north of Kimberley, on the N12, a signpost points the way to Riverton, a popular pleasure resort with bungalows and a caravan park. Anglers who own a boat or canoe can embark here and go upstream or downstream as far as they like until they find fish.



## **BARKLY WEST**

The water below the weir is my favourite spot for a few hours fishing after work during the summer but the section upstream also produces yellowfish. There is a caravan park beside the river.

## **RAKAOFELLA**

Extensive alluvial diamond mining is still in progress between Barkly West and Delportshoop. Rakaofella, immediately downstream of Barkly West, is a resort, with bungalows, conference facilities and so on. This is also a good base from which to explore the waters upstream or down. Call (053) 531-0626 for information.

The river between Delportshoop and Douglas flows mainly through private property and also happens to be the most productive stretch for yellowfish. I mention below a way whereby one can gain access to this choice section of water.

## **DOUGLAS**

This is the home turf of big-fish expert and art-lure maker John Southey. The weir across the river backs up the water for a very considerable distance and a boat or canoe is not only essential to reach the best areas, but is also the most convenient way to fish the river. A caravan park has been established beside the river. Call John Southey at (053) 298-1209 for information about fishing in the Douglas area and for guiding services.

## **GUIDED TRIPS**

For anglers who can carry the cost of a guided tour, those offered by T'Ky Gariep Flyfishing Trails are perhaps the most convenient way to gain access to the choice fishing waters as well as all the other things worth seeing in the region. Your

# **T'Ky Gariep Flyfishing Trails**

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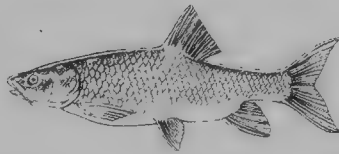
Enquiries and Reservations

Dirk Potgieter of T'Ky Gariep Flyfishing Trails

Cell: 083 265 4795 or Tel / Fax +27 (0) 531-829 834

contact person for this is Dirk Potgieter who can put you onto 80 kilometres of the best water, including places like Schmidtsdrif, Sydney on Vaal and the Rooipoort Conservation Area. He can arrange tailor-made tours to include fishing, bird watching, game viewing, float trips, visits to diamond diggings and shooting in winter. The packages can include transport, meals, refreshments, beverages, accommodation and fishing permits as well as guides. Presentation of a full yellowfish clinic can even be arranged if required. Dirk is a storehouse of regional knowledge and easy to get along with. He will also tell you beforehand whether conditions for fishing are favourable or not, so that you do not waste time and money on a trip doomed to failure. Call him on (0531) 82-9834 or 083 265 4795 in Kimberley for further information.

To conclude, if you are tired of noise, traffic jams, air pollution and fishing venues where there are more fishermen than fish, and if you are bored with hooking pellet-fed trout, then come to the Land of Diamonds and catch yourself a bragging-size yellowfish.





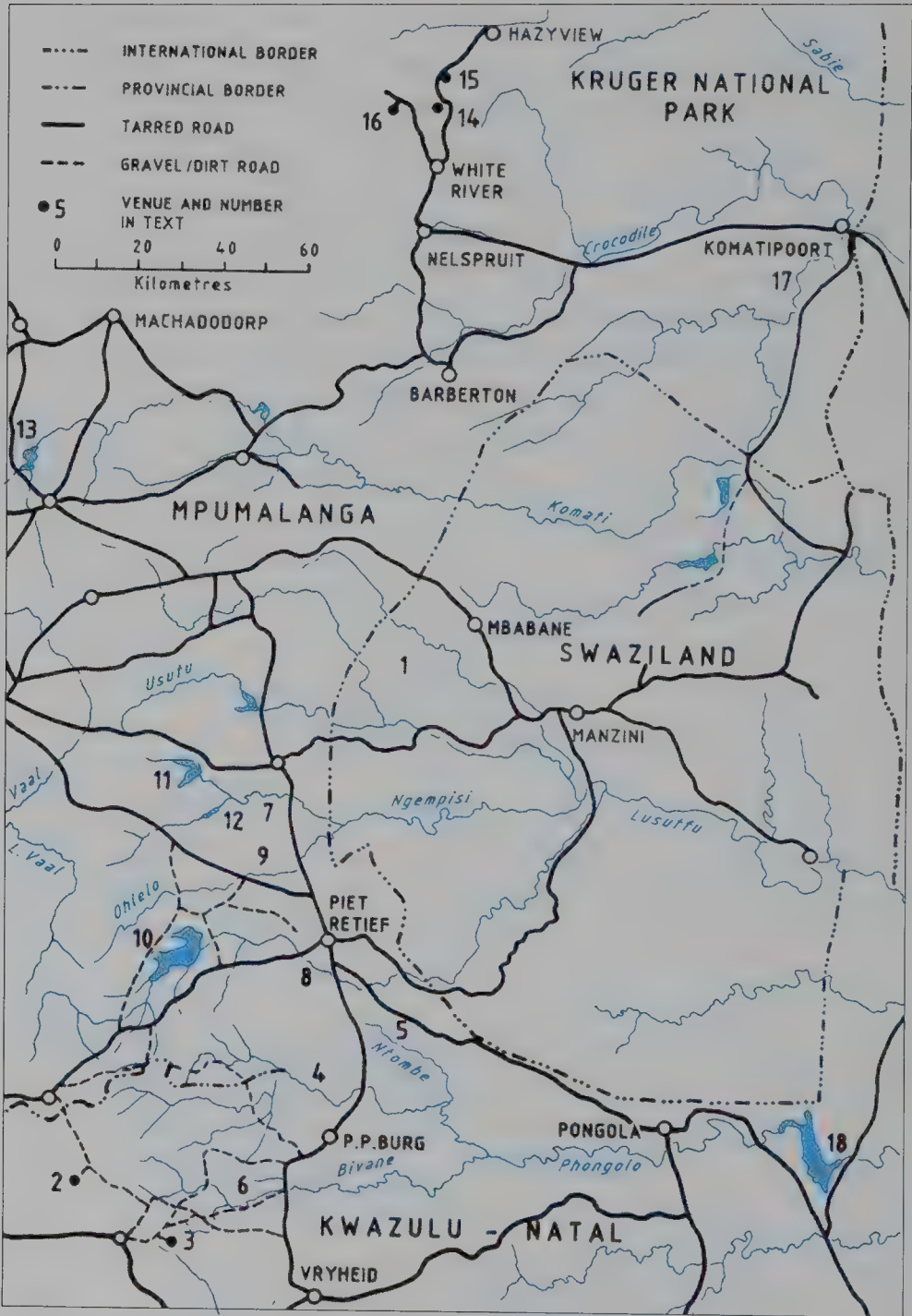


FIGURE 17: YELLOWFISH, TROUT AND BLACK BASS WATERS IN SOUTHEASTERN MPUMALANGA

By Horst Filter



THE LARGE-SCALE YELLOWFISH (*Barbus marequensis*) and the small-scale yellowfish (*Barbus polylepis*) are the two species most commonly sought by flyrodders in southeastern Mpumalanga and northern KwaZulu-Natal.

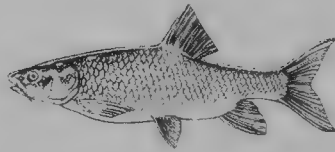
According to Prof. Paul Skelton, the large-scale is widespread in the river systems from the Phongolo northward to the middle and lower Zambezi whereas the small-scale is endemic to the Limpopo, Komati and Phongolo catchments where it inhabits the cooler waters above 600 metres altitude. Both species are riverine fish but can adapt to stillwaters – the small-scale more readily than the large-scale. The most productive rivers in the region (**Figure 17**) are the Phongolo (4), Ntombe (5), Bivane (6), Ngwempisi (7) and, to a lesser extent, the Assegai (8) and the Ohlelo (9). With the exception of the Ngwempisi and the Ohlelo all rise between 1800 and 2000 metres above sea level and, as a result, trout have been established in the headwaters of the Bivane and the Ntombe. Yellowfish are also present in the large storage dams of which there are several in southeastern Mpumalanga.

All the rivers above tend to become muddy after the summer rains settle in and do not clear again until after the rainy season. Consequently flyfishing for yellows is normally confined to the period from May through September. Unlike the smallmouth yellowfish of the Vaal River the local species spend most of their time in deep pools and rarely venture into fast water to feed. Accordingly, I have adapted my technique to get the fly down deep to where they are feeding on the bottom. I use a floating line with a leader ranging from four to five metres in length and cast well upstream to allow the fly sufficient time to sink to the bottom and drift back slowly. I retrieve the line in a series of short twitches to make the fly hop along the bottom. Although they can take hard at times the fish normally suck in the fly with such subtlety that the pick-up is almost imperceptible. Unless you detect the minute movement in the line the fish will eject the fly without you being aware of it. So keep your eyes peeled and at the slightest abnormal movement or hesitation of your line, rod tip or bite indicator, strike – but strike ever so gently. The flies that work best for



me on local rivers are the SS Shrimp, Bloodworm, Montana and small general-purpose nymphs. Dry flies can be very effective when insects hatch on certain evenings. Bass anglers catch fair numbers of yellowfish on artificial lures in the big dams around here but the catches are accidental rather than deliberate, as largemouth black bass is the primary quarry. So far no specific technique for catching yellowfish in dams on fly has been developed, perhaps more from lack of effort than for any other reason.

The area is well served by major highways and there are few fishing spots that cannot be reached in an ordinary passenger car on good dirt or gravel roads. Accommodation is readily available in the major centres and, in the countryside, visitors will find cottages or guesthouses to stay in. For information on fishing, accommodation and guiding services phone River Hunter Flyfishing Safaris at (038) 995-0017.



By Dean Impson



THESE DAYS TROUT AND BLACK BASS are the main targets for freshwater flyfishermen wanting to fish southwestern Cape waters. Few anglers have the pleasure and privilege of tackling a genuine indigenous local freshwater fish on a fly. Why is this the case? The chief reasons are probably ignorance on behalf of the angler and the fact that most remaining populations of these fishes are not readily accessible to them. Certainly it is not because Western Cape yellowfishes aren't worth catching. Ask Mike Dohlhoff, a renowned local flyfisherman, who was fortunate enough to land an 8 kilogram Clanwilliam yellowfish in the dam of the same name several years ago. He informed me recently that sight fishing for yellowfish in the clear waters of the Doring River in late autumn was comparable to sight fishing for trout in the gin clear rivers of New Zealand.

Where can flyfishermen find these elusive fish? The Clanwilliam yellowfish (*Barbus capensis*) and sawfin (*B. serra*) only occur in the Olifants River System of the Western Cape. The whitefish (*B. andrewi*) or witvis, as it is commonly known, is endemic to the Berg and Breede Rivers of the same province (**Figure 15**). The Clanwilliam yellowfish is closely related to the smallmouth yellowfish (*B. aeneus*), which is not surprising as the Olifants and Orange Rivers shared the same mouth to the sea millions of years ago. Similarly, the sawfin and the whitefish are also related due to a joining of the Breede and Olifants systems in the distant past. Professor Paul Skelton states in his book on the Freshwater Fishes of Southern Africa that the sawfin and whitefish are not true yellowfishes although, from an angling perspective, they resemble this group of fishes very closely both in appearance and angling qualities.

The Clanwilliam yellowfish is the largest species attaining an impressive 10 kilograms whereas the sawfin and whitefish are smaller reaching just over 4 kilograms in weight. They are omnivorous, feeding primarily on aquatic insects and algae, but also on crabs, frogs and small fish. Growth is slow with fry taking a year to reach 6 centimetres and it is not surprising, therefore, that all three species are long-lived. Typically they swim in schools and during late spring undertake upstream spawning migrations. Spawning takes place in shallow riffles at the head of pools with eggs being deposited in gravel depressions.





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FOSAF is a body of like-minded, conservation-conscious flyfishers who are passionate about their sport and their environment. This body operates nationally, providing a vital service to flyfishers, clubs and syndicates.

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- \* Continually striving for better access to the subcontinent's flyfishing resources.
- \* Initiating research, training and education programmes in order to foster a better understanding of the sport, the fish and the environment.
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Historical records (many of them in Piscator, journal of the Cape Piscatorial Society) indicate that all three yellowfish species were abundant and widespread before the introduction of exotic fishes, such as bass and trout, and before the senseless degradation and habitat destruction of Western Cape rivers became the norm. In those days they provided fantastic fishing to both locals and visitors from as far afield as the old Transvaal Province. Consider an advertisement for the Hotel Clanwilliam in 1948, which read: "Countless millions up to 20 lb. in weight..... The Olifants teems with yellowfish....". In 1947 Brooks described several visits to the Olifants in autumn that "...provided the sport of my life – never less than seven yellowfish each day from 3 lb. to 5 lb., and on one occasion nineteen." Fishing for whitefish was similarly exciting and productive. For example, in early 1906, Lachlan Maclean undertook a trip to the lower Wemmers River, a tributary of the upper Berg River. After returning he wrote, on 9 February, 1906: "We stayed for two days at the hut on the site of the Berg Hoek Dam and although I covered about two miles of the river there, I saw no trout. I had a rod with me and caught a great many native fish with the fly – witte fish and small carp, but I cast in vain for a trout. The witte fish fought well, and when one of any size was hooked it gave excellent sport." (Note: witte fish = whitefish and carp = Cape kurper, *Sandelia capensis*). Tony Biggs reports that large whitefish up to 2 kilograms were caught in the Molenaars River until the early 1970's. These fish invariably broke the light tippets intended for the smaller rainbow trout that are found in Cape streams.

A visitor fishing these same spots today will have great difficulty finding yellowfish to catch. In many areas they have disappeared and been replaced by introduced species such as barbel, black bass, bluegill, carp and Mozambique tilapia (blue kurper). In the clear southwestern Cape rivers introduced predators such as smallmouth bass easily located and preyed upon juvenile yellowfish whereas impoundments such as the Clanwilliam and Bulshoek dams prevented yellowfish from reaching traditional spawning grounds. These impacts and other activities such as bulldozing riverbanks and pumping excessive quantities of water from rivers for irrigation purposes caused yellowfish populations to crash so that today all three species are listed as threatened with extinction. Many anglers will argue that angling has improved with the introduction of exotic fishes, as there is a wider selection of species to catch. Unfortunately, however, this "improvement" has been achieved at a



massive cost, as a once outstanding yellowfish sportfishery has been lost.

Rainfall in the Western Cape is seasonal and typical of a Mediterranean climate with little rain in summer and frontal rain starting in April and peaking from June to August. Consequently rivers flow strongly from June to September with very low or no flow from December to March. However, both the Berg (below Franschhoek) and Olifants (below Clanwilliam Dam) Rivers have good flow in summer as they receive supplementary water to satisfy irrigation demand. The best months to fish are from September to November and from April to May. Spring is excellent as fish are feeding actively to get into spawning condition and rivers are flowing well, which allows anglers to cast to likely spots without easily spooking fish. Ron Flack-Davison in an article in *Tight Lines* entitled “Clanwilliam Yellows on Fly – Pure Gold” had a very successful spring trip to the Doring River at De Mond. Fishing with dragonfly patterns at the head of pools their group enjoyed excellent success catching and releasing hard-fighting fish up to 3,5 kilograms. Most of the large whitefish on record (up to 4 kilograms) were also caught during the spring period in places such as Voëlvelei Dam and the upper Breede River System. Fishing in autumn is also productive. Rivers are clear and yellowfish are feeding actively to gain condition to see them through the cold winter months. Mike Dohlhoff enjoyed success in May on the Doring River fishing with size 12 Woolly Worms for schooling yellowfish in clear standing pools. Staying out of sight and careful casting were crucial to the success of the two anglers who caught and released nine yellowfish between 1 and 1,5 kilograms in a day. Summer months also yield fish, especially during early morning and late afternoon. The rest of the day can be stiflingly hot and, with temperatures as high as 35° C, it is usually unproductive. Fishing in the middle of winter is impractical, unless you like the ultimate fishing challenge! Not only are the fish inactive but rivers are freezing cold and in flood. The optimum water temperature range for catching yellows is probably between 18° and 26° C.

A 6- to 7- weight rod with a reel capable of holding a flyline and 100 metres of backing should enable you to land one of those legendary 7-kilogram monsters in big water, provided you are fortunate enough to hook one. On smaller streams and in thin clear water you would obviously scale down for the sake of delicacy of presentation and fish size. Most of the water fished will be between 1 and 3 metres in depth so an intermediate line and a floating line that match the rod should suffice.

Yellowfish are intelligent and difficult to catch, particularly in clear water, so a 3-metre leader is recommended. The tippet should not be lighter than 4 kilogram breaking strain, unless you are prepared to face heartbreak when your 3-kilo yellow smashes you on the take or on his first run downstream. A variety of flies have been successful, ranging from size 6 Mrs Simpsons to Woolly Worms of all sizes as well as smaller imitations of dragonfly nymphs and tadpoles. Try various retrieval rates and depths to determine which technique works best on a given day. For example Jaco van Deventer, a Cape Nature Conservation (CNC) official, has enjoyed substantial success fishing large Mrs Simpsons or Woolly Worms along the bottom of deep pools. Dry flies can be successful when there is a hatch of flying ants, usually after a thunderstorm. According to Mike Dohlhoff a size 16 Adams is effective when fish are rising freely. Flyfishermen who regularly catch the other species should enjoy success with the local yellowfishes.

As mentioned previously all three species of Southwestern Cape yellowfishes are threatened. From an angling perspective this means that success is most likely in areas where each species still has reasonably healthy populations. As a conservation exercise, CNC has encouraged farmers within the catchment range of the three species to stock farm dams with juveniles. The following places are recommended for angling for Clanwilliam yellowfish and sawfin.

**BEAVERLAC (10)**

Beaverlac is a Natural Heritage Site that straddles the confluence of the Ratels River and the upper Olifants River. From Porterville head north on the R65 for 3 kilometres and turn right at the sign marked Cardouw and Dasklip Pass. Continue along the gravel road for 10 kilometres and turn right at the Dasklip Pass signpost. Follow the dirt road to the top of the mountain and turn left at the Beaverlac sign from where it is another couple of kilometres or so to the farmhouse. Fishing is permitted in a large farm dam and in the Olifants River where smallmouth bass are also present. Indigenous fish species have to be released if caught. Nature lovers can wander along pleasant trails that wind through an area of magnificent scenery. Camping is permitted and accommodation is available in wooden huts or stone cottages. The entry fee for day visitors is R5,00. Call (02623) 2945 for reservations and information.





### **MOUNT CEDER (11)**

This resort is situated on the Groot River, the major tributary of the upper Doring River. From Ceres follow the R303 through Prince Alfred Hamlet and the Gydo Pass. About 38 kilometres out turn right onto the gravel road. Continue past the Kagga Kamma turn-off which is about 18 kilometres from the R303. Another 30 kilometres should bring you to the Groot River. Mount Cedar is on the far side and to the right. The river consists of a series of pools interspersed with riffles and rapids and is easily accessible. Unfortunately smallmouth bass are also present. Camping facilities have been established and self-catering accommodation is available in a refurbished double story 4-bedroom farmhouse that can sleep twelve. Call André Marais on (0233) 70848 for reservations and information.

### **DE MOND (12)**

De Mond is on the upper Doring River approximately midway between Ceres and Calvinia along the Ceres Karoo road. The turn-off to the property is about 108 kilometres from Ceres and is clearly signposted and marked with a big tyre. From the turn it is another 20 kilometres along a dirt road that is fairly rough but it can be travelled in a passenger car. De Mond has good spring and autumn fishing for yellows and smallmouth bass. It can get very hot from September to April. Visitors can make use of the camping and caravan site or of the self-catering accommodation that is provided. The four chalets can sleep six apiece and there are also two caravans on site. Call Mrs. Linda Hough at (0273) 41-2330 for directions and further information.

### **MATJIES RIVER NATURE RESERVE (13)**

The rugged and spectacular Matjies River is a tributary of the upper Doring River. Visitors have a choice of two access routes. For the first, turn east off the N7 at the Algeria/Cederberg signpost about 30 kilometres north of Citrusdal. Follow the gravel road, which is in reasonable condition, for approximately 63 kilometres to where it terminates against the Ceres-Wuppertal road. The reserve occupies the area to the west of the junction. The second route is the one you take to Mount Cedar but continue on for a further 18 kilometres past the Groot River and turn left. The greater part of the Matjies River can only be reached by kloofing. This venue has no accommodation at present but Dwarsrivier, Tel. (027) 482-2825, Kromrivier, Tel. (027) 482-2807, Nuwerus, Tel. (027) 482-2813 and Groot Rivier (Mount Cedar) are

all near and all have accommodation. Contact Cape Nature Conservation at (027) 482-2403 for information on the reserve and directions on how to get there.

**BUSHMANS KLOOF WILDERNIS RESERVE (14)**

This reserve is located on the Brandewyns River, a tributary of the lower Doring River, in an area of beautiful scenery. From Clanwilliam take the road to Wuppertal via the Pakhuis Pass. Cross the Brandewyns River, which is clearly marked and proceed up the hill for more or less a kilometre to the Bushmans Kloof sign on the right. Turn and follow the signs to the lodge, 8 kilometres away. Yellowfish can be caught in either the river or in several dams that have been stocked whereas bass are present only in the river. All yellowfish caught have to be returned and all bass killed. There are many other activities to partake in such as game-viewing drives, mountain-biking and guided walks to the many rock art sites in the reserve. The area enjoys a splendid display of spring flowers. Fully catered accommodation for twenty guests is available in ten luxury lodges and the conference centre can seat forty delegates. Call (027) 482-2627 for information and (021) 797-0990 or 761-0050 for reservations.

**NIEUWOUDTVILLE DAM**

The dam is a short distance from Nieuwoudtville on a good gravel road. Accommodation is available in town. The spring flower display in the vicinity during August and September is excellent. Contact (02726) 81159 for all further information.

Whitefish have become very rare throughout their range and there are not many places left where they can be caught. In the Berg River system they are thought to be close to extinction. Flyfishermen should try Brandvlei Dam (15) outside Worcester, which still harbours a thriving population of whitefish. They tend to be on the small side and most caught are in the 300- to 500- gram range. The dam also contains a sizeable carp population. Accommodation and angling is available at Nekkies Resort, Tel. (0231) 23461. Alternatively, anglers should approach riparian owners on the Breede River in the Worcester-Slanghoek area for permission to fish during the day. Besides the odd large whitefish there is excellent flyfishing for smallmouth bass.

I have found yellowfishes to be the ultimate challenge of all the freshwater gamefish in the southwestern Cape. At times they are easy to catch and most flyfishermen can then be successful but usually they are far more difficult to deceive than rainbow trout or smallmouth bass. This may be related to their omnivorous feeding habits (often they feed selectively on algae) and possibly because they are also



an intelligent group of fishes. Under these circumstances it will be those anglers who select their spots carefully, approach them even more carefully and then cast and present the correct fly with care and precision that will take fish. Flyfishermen seeking Western Cape yellowfishes are fortunate to be able to angle for them in some of the finest scenery to be had anywhere in the world. Where else in South Africa can one fish with a backdrop of majestic mountains bedecked with unique and beautiful fynbos vegetation whilst carefully attended vineyards and orange groves nestle in the valleys? The sandstone in the catchment areas and the associated mountain fynbos vegetation allow clear nutrient-poor water to seep continuously into the receiving streams ensuring some of the clearest streams and rivers to be found anywhere in Southern Africa.

In concluding, I wish to appeal to interested anglers to give serious thought to the following suggestions. Firstly, all three species are threatened and releasing your fish carefully after landing it is morally and scientifically the correct thing to do. None of these yellows deserves to be caught just once! Secondly, Cape Nature Conservation is eager to receive catch returns from successful anglers to assist us in our yellowfish management programs. Sure it takes time and effort but the information is of absolutely inestimable value to us. Please post angling returns specifying catch localities, date and number and sizes of fish caught to: Mr. N.D. Impson, P.B. X5014, Stellenbosch, 7599. Finally, CNC encourages anglers to keep all exotic species that are caught in rivers where yellowfishes are still found. This is not because CNC is hell-bent on removing all introduced fishes from Western Cape rivers, but rather to give our yellowfish populations every possible chance to survive and recover and to ensure that you, the angler, will always have the opportunity to catch these handsome and athletic fishes.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Tony Biggs, Mike Dohlhoff, Charl du Plessis, Ron Flack-Davison and Jaco van Deventer for their assistance towards compiling this article.



By Louis Wolhuter



**M**ANY ANGLERS RATE THE TIGERFISH, (*Hydrocynus vittatus*), as the finest sporting and fighting fish in the world. The species is widely distributed in tropical Africa extending as far south as the lowveld regions of the Limpopo, Komati and Phongolo/Maputo River systems. In South Africa the original range of the tigerfish has decreased drastically and they occur in fishable quantity in a few isolated localities. Cross-border trips are now necessary to find worthwhile concentrations of this super-sport species. The tigerfish combines fierce aggression with uncommonly good looks. Dark longitudinal stripes cross flanks of creamy silver that grade upward into a bluish to olive-green back. Fins edged in reddish orange further enhance the appearance of this handsome fish. At the business end the tiger is equipped with a fearsome array of sharp-edged interlocking fangs that protrude from the jaws.

Flyfishermen advocate tackle ranging from 6 weight to 10 weight for tigerfish but a 7- or an 8- weight outfit will handle virtually all situations. Reels should have an exposed rim for palming and a smooth reliable drag is advantageous but not essential. The reel must be capable of holding the flyline and at least 100 metres of 9-kilogram test backing. Tigerfish are predominantly subsurface feeders so sinking lines in a range of densities tend to be the norm. In fast water, floating lines and sinktips, in particular, allow for better line manipulation. I prefer shooting heads looped or spliced to floating running lines. Modern high-density full flylines sink almost instantaneously and there is virtually no time to mend line in a fast current. Leaders may vary in length from as little as one metre to two or more metres depending on circumstances. Commercial knotless tapered leaders are far less satisfactory than those hand-tied specifically for tigerfishing. A hard abrasion resistant monofilament nylon such as Maxima is best if you intend tying your own. I use one to two metres of 17- kilogram test for a butt to which I attach about 50 centimetres of 5- to 6-kilogram test, with Bimini-twist loops at either end, as a tippet. This leader can withstand the strain of doing battle with a tigerfish in fast water much better than a knotless leader or one tied with standard knots. The tippets must be protected from



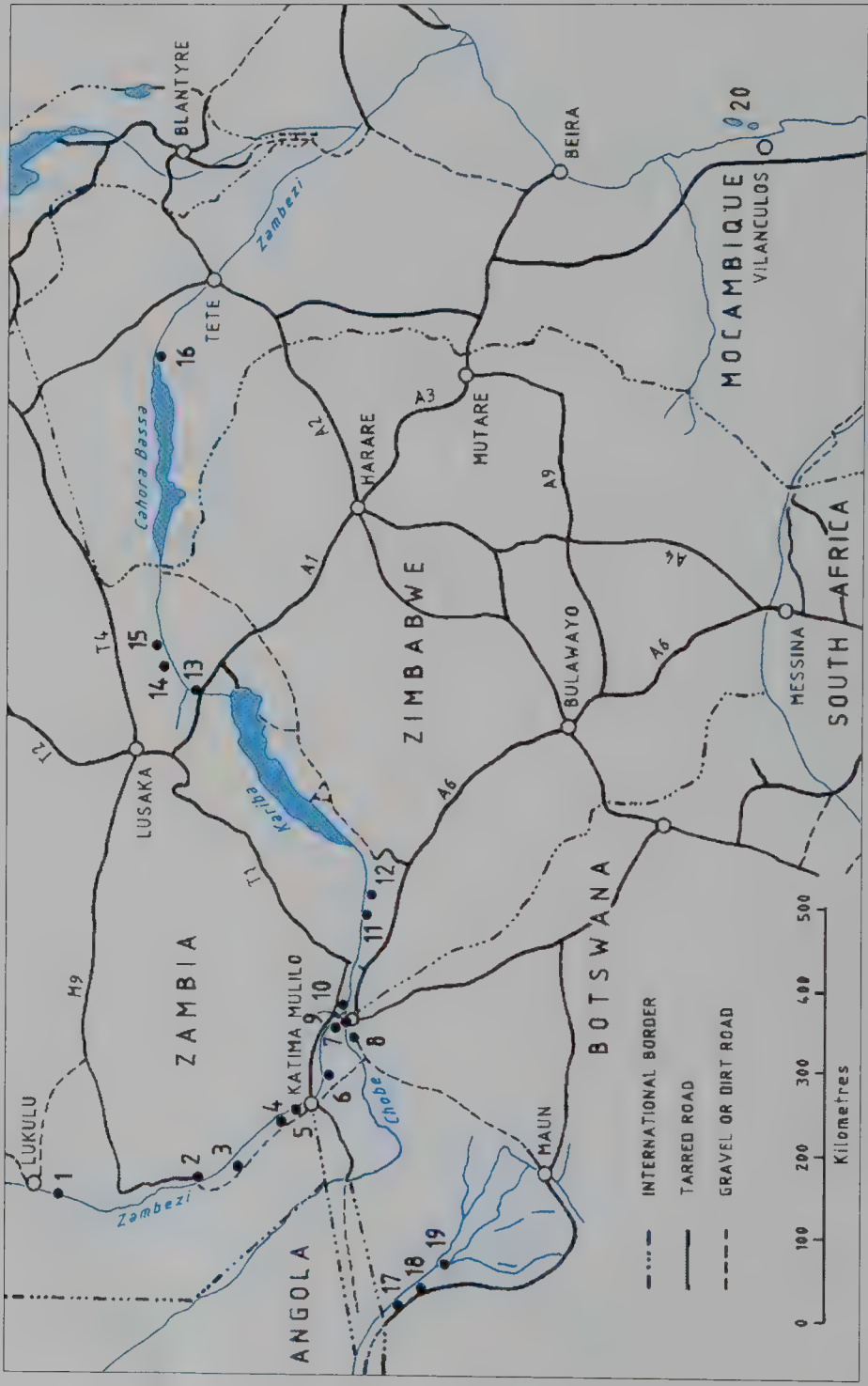


FIGURE 18: TIGERFISH WATERS OF SOUTH CENTRAL AFRICA

the tiger's teeth with 8 to 10 centimetres of 14- or 18- kilogram solid steel trolling wire, preferably in a dark colour. The steel wire can be connected to the tippet with a small black swivel.

There are probably as many favourite fly patterns for tigerfish as there are flyfishermen. Whatever the design used, it must be borne in mind that few flies will withstand the ravages of a tiger's teeth for more than a couple of encounters so buying or tying complex or expensive flies is costly in terms of time as well as money. Murray Pedder of Fly Fishing Adventures puts together a nice boxed collection of twelve tigerfish flies in six different patterns. The chartreuse Lefty's Deceiver, in particular, has performed very well for me. If, however, he still includes the tandem patterns, exchange them immediately for Deceivers or something else. Casting a tandem-tied fly is a pain in the neck and one touch from a tiger converts it into a mangled coil of steel wire and feathers that can never be used again. The upper Zambezi was in flood when I visited it early in 1997 and the water somewhat murky. The locals told us to use flies with a large component of red in the dressing, as this was the proven colour on that stretch of river. Yet of the eight fish we caught, seven took a fly with chartreuse as dominant colour and Murray's Deceivers did themselves proud. Peter Bezuidenhout of The Flyfishing Company ties a simple no-nonsense woolhead pattern in different colour combinations and I believe they have proved to be very effective. In my opinion there is not a single fly that will catch tigerfish in most places and under most conditions. A size 1/0 to 3/0 saltwater-type Deceiver with grizzly and/or white saddle wings and a touch of red in the dressing may come the closest but to be successful, fly size, colour and type have to be matched to prevailing conditions as for all gamefish. This concept was brought home vividly a few years ago at Deka, where, under conditions of very low and clear water, a Blonde Tiger tied in muted colours drew strikes aplenty whereas the more flashy patterns were completely ignored. I cannot overemphasize how absolutely essential it is to use needle-sharp hooks and to keep them that way, as tigerfish have one of the boniest and hardest-to-penetrate mouths in the business.

A boat is almost indispensable when fishing for tigers. Not only is it a means of transport and a stable casting platform, but it also allows the angler to position himself in favourable sites which cannot be reached by any other means. It is axiomatic



that tigerfish country is crocodile country. When an angler on foot selects a spot to cast from, his choice must be based primarily on safety from possible crocodile attack rather than the fishing potential of that spot. With boats this problem is largely negated and the major concern is to avoid hippos where they are present. Other essential items of equipment include polarised sunglasses, a broad-rimmed hat, artery forceps (for safe removal of hooks from a tiger's lethal jaws), a hook sharpener and wire cutters. Don't forget the high factor sunscreen lotion.

Tigerfish occupy a variety of habitats ranging from large lakes such as Kariba and Tanganyika, to the small flood-plain pans along the Phongolo River, and from the slow meandering rivers of the Okavango Swamp to the fast white-water sections of the Zambezi and other rivers. On lakes the best places are generally around inlets and islands and in small bays or coves where baitfish congregate. Under normal conditions, the fly is fished deep on a sinking line and actively retrieved and it is advantageous to be able to make long casts. Flyfishing for tigerfish in lakes is hard work and, in my opinion, the least productive way of capturing them. In the smaller and slower rivers of the Okavango Swamp, a fly cast tight against the papyrus-lined banks will usually bring a response from a lurking tiger – the outside of a meander is generally a good spot. The cast can be either upstream or down and the fly is allowed to sink before retrieving. The speed of the retrieve should be varied until the right tempo is found. At times it is quite slow as for bass but more commonly a fast retrieve will draw most strikes. Flyfishermen invariably prefer catching their tigers in swift water where the fish lie in positions similar to those occupied by trout and other fast-water frequenting gamesters. Here, the classic wet fly or streamer cast, fished across and down, produces consistently. A favourite taking spot is where the fly swings out of a primary current tongue into a secondary current. After the fly has swung directly downstream retrieve it somewhat erratically to mimic the movements of a small baitfish. Vary the depth and speed of retrieve to find the most favourable combinations. A fast retrieve often draws strikes in early morning when tigers are most active and feed closer to the surface. Tigerfish are famed for their fast runs and spectacular jumping but if there is one characteristic that lodges in the mind it is the strike, which can only be described as electrifying. Not even saltwater fish that beat the pants off a tiger when it comes to fighting ability, can match that almost frightening surge of sheer aggression and ferocity that telegraphs up the line when a big tiger smashes your fly.

Summer is, traditionally, the season favoured by tigerfish anglers with the prime months being September to November, before the onset of the rainy season. Unfortunately October and November are normally also the hottest months of the year. Try to get onto the water before sunrise, as early morning is by far the best time. Between 10:00 and 16:00 it is uncomfortably hot and the fishing generally unrewarding. Around 16:00 activity starts picking up again and until dusk expect consistent action. In the upper Zambezi conditions tend to change the further upstream one goes. In western Zambia the season is from May to December at which time the river starts pushing into its enormous flood plain. In the Impalila Island area, in years of good rainfall, the flooding commences in late January and peaks around late April. It is said that when this happens virtually the entire fish population moves onto the flood-plain for various purposes. In July, when the high water is receding, the tigerfish lie in ambush around the entry points of flood-plain drainage streams into the main river channel(s). A few big fish were reported to have been caught on fly in the main stem of the Zambezi in midwinter but whether this is related in any way to the flood-and-ebb cycle is not obvious. There is little evidence of any detailed records being kept by operators of lodges and fishing camps as to where, when and how tigerfish are caught. This is a pity because such a database can be indispensable in making reliable predictions as to the whereabouts of fish at specific times of the year and placing clients over them with confidence. The tigerfish population is under serious threat from humans, especially in Lake Kariba, and it is absolutely unjustifiable that this magnificent gamefish be killed by so-called sport-fisherman purely for egotistic reasons. Please practice catch, record and release.

In the section following, I shall continue the same scheme as in the previous edition of this book, by describing the various tigerfishing venues in the catchment areas or river systems in which they are situated.

#### **THE ZAMBEZI RIVER CATCHMENT**

From its source on a low wooded hill in the extreme northwestern tip of Zambia, the Zambezi flows across Central Africa for more than 2 500 kilometres to where it meets the Indian Ocean on the Moçambique coast (**Figure 18**). In the process it crosses, borders or touches Zambia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Moçambique. Without question, the Zambezi River system still provides the





finest tigerfishing in Southern Africa, even though stocks have been decimated in certain areas. Since the first edition of this book appeared many more venues have come to light or been established and new ones are continually opening. Contact telephone numbers are listed for some of the venues that follow, but for all of them information and reservation facilities are also provided by Charles Norman Safaris, (011) 888-7386/888-3591, and/or Nkwazi Africa, (011) 764-4606.

#### **TIGER CAMP (1)**

The western part of Zambia is an area of low relief underlain by Kalahari sand. Here the Zambezi is wide and shallow and flows surprisingly fast over a sandy substrate. It is bordered by extremely wide flood plains and carries a huge head of fish. Tiger Camp is, to my knowledge, one of the first, if not the first, fishing camp to have been established in this region and, in a relatively short period, has established several IGFA records for tigerfish as well as other species. The fishing season commences in May and ends in December when the Zambezi starts inundating its flood plain. Overland the camp is more than 600 kilometres from Lusaka but the road is in poor condition and it is not really a drive-in proposition. There are landing strips at the camp as well as at Lukulu and flying in is certainly the recommended way to get there.

For information and reservations phone Tigerfishing Tours Ltd. On (09260) + 1 + 26-2810 in Lusaka.

#### **BAROTSELAND FISHING SAFARIS (2)**

This venue is in Senanga, about 160 kilometres downstream of Tiger Camp. A large house accommodates guests in five en suite bedrooms. Fast water downstream provides excellent fishing for tigerfish whereas the area around Senanga has good fishing for bream species (*Serranochromis* spp.). The annual flood cycle is later than at Tiger Camp and the area is inundated between March and May. Usually by June, the water has receded and the fishing season peaks in July and August. Senanga is accessible by road from either Lusaka or Katima Mulilo. The latter route necessitates crossing the river by ferry at Sitoti, 23 kilometres south of Senanga. Apparently the ferry breaks down periodically and anglers may be left stranded on either side of the river. There is a landing strip for light aircraft at Senanga.

**MAZIBA BAY LODGE (3)**

This lodge is immediately below the Ngonye Falls, approximately 80 kilometres downriver of Senanga. The river changes its character at this point and for 130 kilometres downstream to Katima Mulilo the flow is interrupted repeatedly by rapids. It is a good area for tigerfish and the season is from August into the new year. The camp is on the right bank of the river, about 120 kilometres from Katima Mulilo. It is accessible by car or bakkie except for the last 5 kilometres, which is 4x4 terrain. There is an all-weather landing strip 5 kilometres away. Accommodation is provided in six tents with teak floors. The ablution block is separate. Inflatable boats and guides are available. Visitors are discouraged from bringing their own craft.

**MUTEMWA CAMP (4)**

This luxury-tented camp is almost 50 kilometres upstream of Katima Mulilo and can be reached in passenger cars during the dry season. This stretch of the Zambezi has not yet been subjected to heavy fishing pressure, hence it offers excellent flyfishing opportunities for tigerfish. The river is studded with islands and the variety of water types allows the angler ample opportunity to target other species. Inflatable boats with guides are provided. The six tents are situated on the riverbank under huge evergreen trees and all have bathrooms en suite. Camping is permitted but no private craft are allowed. The nearest landing strip is at Katima Mulilo. Road transfers can be arranged.

**ZAMBALOZI LODGE (5)**

This fairly new camp is on an island some 20 kilometres upstream of Katima Mulilo and is said to specialize in flyfishing. Accommodation is in tents with en-suite bathrooms.

**KALIZO LODGE (6)**

Kalizo is on the Namibian side of the Zambezi River about 40 kilometres below Katima Mulilo. In addition to tigerfish, anglers can opt for various bream species, catfish, pike and so on. Boats and guides are provided. Accommodation is in rustic reed-and-thatch bungalows with a communal dining room and bar and a separate ablution block. Kalizo can be reached in passenger cars. Mpacha Airport near Katima Mulilo is the closest air-access point.



The “Four Corners” region where Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe meet at the confluence of the Zambezi and Chobe Rivers is not only easily accessible but it also offers excellent accommodation and super fishing for tigers, several species of bream and other varieties of Zambezi fish.

#### **IMPALILA ISLAND LODGE (7)**

This upmarket establishment overlooks the Zambezi River at the upstream end of Impalila Island. The multichanneled Membova Rapids below the camp yield tigerfish of impressive proportions whereas the Kasai Channel and its network of tributaries and backwaters extending to the Chobe River, are prime habitat for several species of bream as well as tigerfish. Boats and guides are provided. The six twin-bedded chalets are tastefully positioned to blend in with the natural bush and the bar and dining room are centred on an enormous baobab tree. There is a landing strip on the island and visitors, who travel by car or air to Kasane across the Chobe River in Botswana, are collected by boat.

Call Rod and Reel Africa on (011) 447-2187 for reservations and information.

#### **CHOBE SAFARI LODGE (8)**

The lodge is spread along the right bank of the Chobe River adjacent to the village of Kasane in Botswana. The river above and in front of the lodge is deep and slow but the Chobe Rapids are only a short distance downstream. Boats and guides are available. The entrance to the Chobe National Park is next door. Accommodation ranges from conventional rooms and family units in the main lodge to thatched rondavels and a campsite on the banks of the Chobe. Kasane has an international airport and is served by tarred roads from South Africa and Zimbabwe.

#### **ICHINGO RIVER CAMP (9)**

This pleasant camp has been built on the Chobe Rapids on the south side of Impalila Island across the river from Kasane. A braided network of streams interspersed with small islands offers a choice of wide tumultuous rapids or small intimate riffles and runs – ideal tigerfish and nembwe (*Serranochromis robustus*) territory. A short upstream run puts you on the deep Chobe or the slow moving papyrus-lined Kasai Channel and its tributaries. Ichingo has very knowledgeable guides and provides boats with large uncluttered foredecks that are a flyfisher's delight. The camp consists of roomy twin-bedded en-suite tents mounted on stilts and overlooking the river.

The central dining room/lounge/bar area is under thatch and the cuisine is superb. Access is the same as for Impalila Lodge.

For information and reservations call (09267) 65-0143 in Kasane or Rod and Reel Africa on (011) 447-2187 in Johannesburg.

**ROYAL CHUNDU LODGE (10)**

This establishment is situated on the Katambara Rapids 15 kilometres below Kazangula on the Zambian side. The rapids are 15 kilometres long and highly rated as tigerfish water. Boats and guides are available. Visitors are accommodated in six luxury chalets. The lodge is accessible by car from Livingstone or from Botswana via the Kazangulu Ferry. There is a landing strip but aircraft have to clear customs in Livingstone first.

**SIDINDA LODGE (11)**

This small camp is situated in that relatively inaccessible section of the Zambezi River between Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba. It is 80 kilometres below the falls and is used as a hunting lodge in winter and a fishing lodge in summer. Violent rapids upstream as well as downstream of the camp isolate a 25-kilometre stretch of blue ribbon Zambezi water for the virtual sole use of Sidinda clients. Boats and guides are provided. Charles Norman says the fishing is superb. Four twin-bedded thatched chalets can accommodate eight persons. Sidinda can be reached by car on good roads.

**SUNDOWNER ADVENTURES (12)**

This camp is just above the confluence of the Deka and Zambezi Rivers and at normal water levels this is the last set of rapids above Lake Kariba. This section of river is a tigerfish venue of long standing. Guides and boats are available. Four lodges and a chalet can accommodate a total of nineteen guests. Tarred roads lead to within a kilometre or two of the camp.

Although Lake Kariba still produces large tigerfish for the artificial-lure and bait fishermen it is somewhat of a non-starter as a flyfishing venue. At the best of times tigers are difficult to catch on fly in large stillwaters but in Kariba, so I am told, they no longer frequent their usual feeding sites around the shoreline. Instead they are dispersed across the lake following the schools of kapenta that were introduced as a source of food for humans some time ago. The following venues are all below Kariba.





### **TIGER SAFARIS (13)**

This camp is at Chirundu about 80 kilometres downstream of the lake. It is on the Zimbabwean side right by the bridge over the Zambezi and fishing for tigers, vundu (*Heterobranchis longifilis*) and cornish jack (*Mormyrops anguilloides*) is reported to be excellent. Accommodation is in self-catering thatched chalets on the river's edge and boats are available.

### **ROYAL ZAMBEZI LODGE (14)**

This resort is on the Zambian side of the river alongside the Lower Zambezi National Park. Fishing for tigerfish and other Zambezi species such as bream (*Serranochromis* spp.), chessa (*Distichodus shenga*), nkupe (*D. mossambicus*), cornish jack and vundu is excellent. The park is highly acclaimed and the game viewing offered by the lodge is quite outstanding. Six luxury walk-in tented chalets with en-suite bathrooms provide accommodation for twelve guests under a canopy of towering evergreen trees. The camp can be reached by road from Lusaka or from Chirundu but the latter access route is not suitable for passenger cars. The lodge has a landing strip for visitors coming in by charter flight.

### **CHIAWA CAMP (15)**

Chiawa is in the Lower Zambezi National Park about 30 kilometres below the previous venue. The river here is wide and sandy, broken into many shallow streams that offer exciting fast-water fishing for tiger in particular. Vundu, chessa and nkupe are plentiful but not bream. The same comments on game viewing apply as for the previous venue. Accommodation for twelve is in six safari tents under thatched shelters. Access is by charter flight from Lusaka or by floatplane from Kariba. Alternatively the management can arrange surface travel from Lusaka.

### **UGEZI TIGER LODGE (16)**

This camp on Cahora Bassa is still fairly new and is near the dam wall and the town of Songo. Tigerfish up to 11 kilograms have been caught during the past year but essentially on bait. Apparently there has been little, if any, effort to capture fish on fly so any predictions at this stage would be misplaced. Accommodation is in furnished safari tents and boats and guides are provided. You can drive there all the way on tar road from Johannesburg or fly in to the international airport at Songo.

**THE OKAVANGO RIVER SYSTEM**

The Okavango River rises in southeastern Angola and forms the border between Namibia and Angola for about 300 kilometres. It then cuts across the narrow neck of the Caprivi Strip, enters Botswana and flows southeastward along the panhandle for approximately 100 kilometres before splaying out into the complex network of anastomosing streams that constitute the Okavango Delta or Swamp. The waters of the swamp eventually dissipate in the sands of the Kalahari Desert to the south. The average size of tigerfish caught in the swamp is unquestionably smaller than in the Zambezi. The current trend seems to be that operators concentrating on tigerfish as their star performer are moving to the Zambezi, whereas those remaining in Okavango are focusing on the ecotourist and fishing plays a somewhat lesser role in their scheme of things.

**DROTSKY'S CABINS (17)**

Situated on the Okavango River not far south of the Namibian border, the camp offers fishing for tigerfish and other endemic species. Chalets are available and there are campsites, a bar and a restaurant. Boats can be hired. Call (09267) 88978 in Maun for information and reservations.

**NXAMASERI LODGE (18)**

This lodge is on an island in the Nxamaseri Channel approximately 50 kilometres below the border. The river harbours more than eighty species of fish, including eleven of bream and, of course, tigerfish. Boats and mokoros with guides are available for fishing or exploring the maze of papyrus-fringed channels. The lodge can accommodate twelve people in six thatched en-suite chalets with private wooden decks overlooking the Nxamaseri Channel. The tar road from Maun to Shakawe passes within a few kilometres of the lodge and there is a landing strip nearby.

**GUMA LAGOON CAMP (19)**

Guma Camp is at the southeastern end of the panhandle and overlooks the largest lagoon in the delta. Fishing in the lagoon is mostly for the various bream species whereas the best tiger fishing is in the main river, 30 minutes away by boat. The owner, Geoff Randall, is an expert angler and knows his waters well. Boats and guides are provided. Accommodation is in six en-suite safari tents on concrete floors



and under thatched shelters. There are also four self-catering tents that can sleep eight people. You can drive to within 15 kilometres of Guma on tar and leave your car under guard in Etsa village. A vehicle or boat from the lodge will collect you. There is a landing strip near the camp.

### **SOUTH AFRICAN RIVERS**

The Limpopo, Komati and Phongolo River systems are the only ones to have had good populations of tigerfish in the past. The South African section of the Limpopo River is, for practical purposes devoid of tigerfish although there are probably some left in Moçambique. Small numbers of fish still ascend the Komati River as far as Komatipoort (**17, Figure 17**) but the only significant runs remaining are in the tributaries flowing through the Kruger National Park where angling is not permitted. The Jozini Dam (**18, Figure 17**) on the Phongolo River has a resident population of tigerfish but it has never really developed into a good fishery, one of the reasons probably being the almost perpetual murkiness of the water. The Lusutfo River in Swaziland is the major tributary of the Phongolo. It is so heavily polluted, largely by pulp and paper mills, that life of any kind must find it difficult to survive.

### **OTHER AREAS**

Two Zambian lodges, Kasaba Bay and Nkamba Bay in the Sumbu National Park at the southern end of Lake Tanganyika should be of interest to flyfishers. In addition to the common tigerfish there are also Goliath tigers (very rare), Nile perch, lake salmon and kupi, a gamester that performs spectacularly on light tackle. Bear in mind that Lake Tanganyika is said to be home to more than six hundred species of fish. Guided boat fishing is available. Both lodges are under competent management and are accessible by scheduled airline or charter flights. Call (011) 888-3591 for full details and reservations.



By Louis van der Westhuizen



FLYFISHING FOR CATFISH (*Clarias Gariepinus*) or barbel, as they are more commonly called in South Africa, is performed mainly in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area. The De Rust resort on Hartebeespoort Dam is the most popular venue. To get there, take the R512 past Lanseria Airport and turn left at the Broederstroom T-junction. The road winds its way up a long hill for about 5 kilometres and as you start the descent you will glimpse the dam for the first time and also, further down, a turn-off to the right marked Oberon. At the bottom the road turns sharply to the left. After 2 kilometres turn right onto the Sun City road and follow it for 1 kilometre to the Lakeland sign. Turn right just before the Lakeland fence and continue to the De Rust gate where R5,00 per person will get you in. Follow the power lines to where they stop and turn down towards the water, then right again for 400 metres and you are there. On Saturdays and Sundays during the season you are bound to find other flyfishers at this spot.

A rod with a 7- to 9-weight rating, a sink-tip line and at least 100 metres of 14 kilogram backing are adequate for barbel. For your leader use a rod length of 7-kilogram hard mono such as Maxima. At the business end, tie on a strong-hook fly ranging in size from 6 to 2/0 and honed to razor sharpness. Two streamer patterns will take barbel under most conditions locally. The first is a Mrs Simpson and the second a Buggered Worm, also erroneously referred to as "Half-a-Chicken" pattern. When fishing for barbel stick to water not deeper than 1,5 metres as they rarely take a fly at greater depths. A pair of waders is essential but do not wade deeper than your hips as you will only drive the fish further away if you try to get too close. Rather cast to them and, for this reason, I think being able to cast at least 20 metres is essential. If the fish were disturbed, stand quietly until they come within casting range again. Flyfishing for barbel is largely sightfishing. They normally rise to the surface and roll to gulp air and, in the process, leave a cluster of bubbles behind. Find such an area and fish for them just above the bottom of the lake, which is where they will be feeding. Vary the speed of retrieve to determine whether they want a slow or faster moving fly. The best flyfishing period at Hartebeespoort Dam is from the middle of July to the





middle of September when the barbel tend to follow and feed on the schools of young kurper that congregate in bays and around inlets. The most productive part of the day without question is from noon to sunset. A note of warning – if ever you find yourself on the water and a thunderstorm approaches get out immediately and seek shelter. We had a very convincing demonstration on Hartebeespoort Dam some years ago of how well graphite rods act as lightning conductors. When the wet weather arrives after September we fish dams with reasonably clear water in Johannesburg and surrounding areas. I like Middle Dam in Benoni and Vogelstruisbult Dam near Springs.

De Rust is only 45 minutes from Johannesburg centre so accommodation is no problem. Anglers who may want to stay over at Hartebeespoort Dam can try Kudala Lodge opposite the Oberon entrance. For information call (012055) 1862 and ask for Lola.



By Piet Goosen



BECAUSE OF THE ENORMOUS POPULATION of catfish or barbel in the Vaal River it is not surprising that many flyfishermen in search of the elusive yellowfish often end up fighting a losing battle with a monstrous barbel on hopelessly inadequate tackle. You can also fish for them deliberately but if you too intend partaking in the thrill of “catfishing” the Vaal keep the following in mind:

- Barbel are the largest predators among our freshwater fishes and specimens in excess of 20 kilograms are caught every season.
- They hunt in shoals in sections of rivers and dams that are, almost invariably, heavily weeded or full of obstructions.
- They always fight as deep as possible and, of course, that is where most snags are.
- They can be either very aggressive or very docile.
- They eat large food items such as birds, fish, frogs and small mammals.

No wonder it is simply an unequal tug of war when the lightweight fundis hook into one of these brutes. Barbel are good fly rod targets because they habitually come up to the surface to gulp air and thereby reveal their presence to the angler who immediately knows where to cast his fly.

In my experience you can expect barbel action to last from September to May. The peak period depends on the rainfall pattern – short summer rainstorms act as a turn-on whereas long hard rains cause the river to rise and become dirty, making flyfishing impossible. The influx of fresh water after a rainstorm causes most fish, including barbel, to go on the bite. When the river continues to rise, yellowfish are the first to go off the bite but the knowledgeable flyfisherman can still find pods of feeding barbel that may be tempted to take highly visible chartreuse or fluorescent red/orange flies in the dirty water.

The annual spawning run of the mudfish (*Labeo capensis*) triggers a feeding frenzy among barbel that can last for days or even weeks. Countless thousands of mudfish assemble on the gravel beds in shallow riffles to spawn and the barbel move in to “vacuum” up the eggs. The major spawning activity in the area where I guide; is



just below the weir at the Schoemansdrif Bridge. Beadhead flies tied in white, soft pink and brown and fished right along the bottom, nearly always draw a response from barbel in the 2-to 4-kilogram class. The larger barbel assemble in water from 0,5 to 1,5 metres in depth below the riffles and prey actively on the spawning mudfish. I have dissected some of these brutes and found mudfish weighing as much as a kilogram in their stomachs. Occasionally, we succeed in hooking and landing them on large saltwater-type flies such as Lefty's Deceivers, Epoxy Minnows and Rabbit Leeches. Art-lure anglers really have a ball with 7- to 10- centimetre Shadraps on these occasions.

Having explained some of the basic elements of barbel fishing, let me describe a typical float trip on the Vaal River between Schoemansdrif and Elgro Lodge where I guide and conduct white-water rafting safaris. To start off I advise my clients to bring the following tackle: a 9- weight flyrod (feel free to use a 6- to 8- weight but don't say I didn't warn you); a matching floating and/or sinktip line; 7-kilogram test leaders plus a spool of 10- to 12- kilogram mono; longnose pliers, or equivalent, to release fish, and an assortment of big flies. Which Flies? Well, there are any number that will work. I always advise my clients to choose any big fly with black and red in it, to use it for an hour and, only then, if it is unsuccessful, to switch to something else. The philosophy behind this is that someone in the group is likely to be successful, not everyone changes flies after the first fish but only after the second or third, if or when a productive pattern emerges (hopefully). Streamer flies that have done well in the past include black Zonkers, Woolly Buggers, Silver Darters, Woolly Worms and olive-and-black Dog Nobblers. Large fluorescent Montana Nymphs and dragonfly nymph imitations are top choices and, at certain times, terrestrial patterns such as Flying Ants, Black Ants and Van's Cricket are eagerly taken. My own personal choice is a no-name fly tied by Tjaart van der Walt with black rabbit fur and a red, yellow and orange tail tied on a No 2 hook.

Float fishing trips usually commence at the Schoemansdrif Bridge over the Vaal River. We use inflatable 3,5-metre two-man white-water canoes to drift lazily downstream and search for barbel activity. Mostly they are in the shallows feeding on minnows or in the weedy flats where they prey on dragonfly nymphs, crabs and anything edible. (Casting to barbel activity in midstream over deep water seldom

produces but we try anyway). More often than not we hear barbel feeding before we see them. We cautiously drift into casting range and place the fly in the area where they are most active. A slow twitch, twitch just under the surface with a big water-pushing fly often results in a heart-stopping strike. Strike very hard. Barbel have powerful jaws that can clamp down so hard they literally just hang onto the hook and prevent the barb from penetrating flesh. Now the fun begins – a lively 10-kilo specimen often keeps a chap with a 9-weight outfit busy for twenty minutes or more whereas an optimistic and exceptionally lucky 4-weighter may be occupied for at least an hour. Reality rarely works that way, though! But when one of those 18-kilogram big daddies latches on I simply sit back, relax and enjoy the performance. A thug that size frequently takes the angler and his canoe for a merry ride. Harvey Venter of Windknot Fly Fishing Club was the boat partner when Riaan van der Walt got stuck into a 14-kilogram “jaws”. The fish was boated after a fight of more than an hour. Believe me this is more fishing than the average trout angler gets in a lifetime. Said Harvey, “That’s the biggest barbel I have ever seen.” I have left out the adjectives.

Barbel have very sensitive whiskers that can detect the slightest movements in water – they can even locate your fly in pitch darkness. Their eyes are very small and they have poor eyesight, which is a consideration when designing flies for barbel or when fishing for them. We can utilize this knowledge when fishing under overhanging trees and branches. Cormorants and egrets always roost on the same branches that are clearly defined by the whitewashed areas below. Barbel gather under these branches and scavenge everything that drops from above – yes, you guessed it – even the bird droppings. When we notice swirls or bubbles in these spots we drift silently into casting range. Now a sinktip line comes into play – cast a white fly (even a Lefty’s Deceiver or Marabou) to this spot and do nothing, just wait. The fish would have sensed the “plop” of the fly and is now searching for the tidbit. When it is found – sometimes after more than a minute – wham, slam, bang and the race is on!

When all else fails a guide must turn to the last trick in the book. Now, purist flyfishermen may protest, but allow me to emphasise that a fish on a flyrod is what this game is all about. Art-lure anglers have, for many years, used a technique known as “calling” for barbel. A big black leadhead jig is suspended in the water about 50 centimetres below the rod tip and the water surface is then agitated with the tip. The results often are astounding! A similar effect can be created with a big Woolly Worm





or any other large visible fly weighted with one or two split shot.

Use a heavy, 9- or 10- weight rod and reel in the line until just the last 30 to 50 centimetres of the leader protrudes past the tip. The idea is to drop the fly into the water with a loud plop alongside suitable structure, such as reeds or tree stumps, and then to stir the surface softly with the rod tip. The following sequence works best for me. Plop the fly hard into the water. Shake the rod with just the front guide in the water for eight to ten seconds. Now, slowly lift the fly from the water and drop it back in exactly the same spot. Repeat this three times and then allow it to sink and hang motionless for two to three minutes. If this does not provoke a strike, try once more. Move on if you are not successful after the second sequence or if you catch a fish. You will hardly ever get a second strike in the same place. This procedure is successful because barbel are very alert and home in on any unusual commotion which they suspect may be a food source. The stirring of the water gets their attention, the plop, plop, plop of the fly confirms their suspicion and they start searching with a vengeance. Believe me, they will eventually find your carefully tied fly and proceed to destroy it. If you fish from a boat it must be stationary. It is obviously useless to try this technique if a drifting boat moves your fly away from the spot where you agitated the water. This is short line fishing. Don't play the hero with a 2X or 3X leader. The strike is furious and you will only leave the fish with a hook imbedded in its jaw. I advise my clients to use a metre or so of ordinary 13-kilogram test mono as a leader. If you think this is excessive you obviously haven't seen or felt the strike of a big barbel – the artlure guys use 22-kilogram line and I have seen them get smashed up quite often. If you fish from a boat and hook a barbel, clamp down on the reel promptly and don't give an inch. Move the boat immediately into open water where you can let up and start doing battle. It is obvious why two people are necessary in a boat for this type of fishing – one to fish and the other to handle the oars. Barbless hooks make it much easier to release a fish after capture. (What are you going to do with a big slimy flathead in your boat for the rest of the day, anyway?).

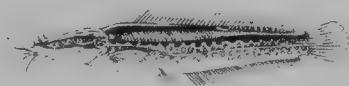
Let me give you a final word of warning about this technique. Firstly, it is highly addictive and causes even lazy fishermen to rush down to the water before sunrise in order to strike the water. It is, perhaps, the major reason why barbel fishermen at Elgro Lodge are commonly referred to as the "Moses clan". Secondly,

don't use your favourite split-cane for this game. It often happens that an overeager big daddy mistakenly latches onto the rod tip amidst all that commotion in the water and then you really find out what it means to "put a bend in your rod".

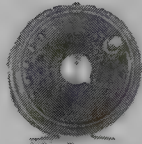
It is not an uncommon sight to see shoals of barbel swimming at the surface in slow water with their mouths open. They are obviously feeding on floating material and I have often seen them hooked on a dry fly. I still cannot decide, though, if they take the fly deliberately or whether they simply gulp up anything that comes their way. When they feed in this manner barbel are very skittish and the slightest line disturbance will frighten them away. If you can see them under bridges or overhanging trees or in shallow weedy areas, where you can approach quite closely, try dapping a big black fly in front of them. This often causes them to strike furiously.

To conclude, don't be upset by the fact that you cannot cast a long line. Long casts are rarely necessary and even relative novices can put a fly in front of a barbel. Children who have been on float trips with me have, on occasion, caught the most fish simply because they kept on casting when adults were searching for better spots.

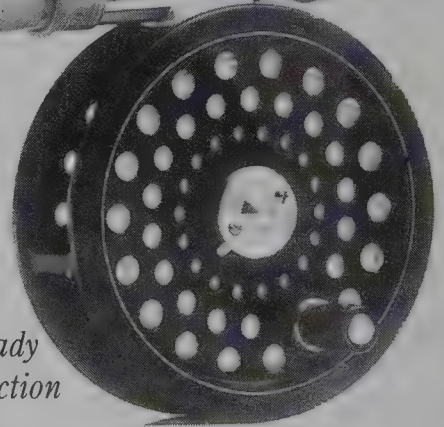
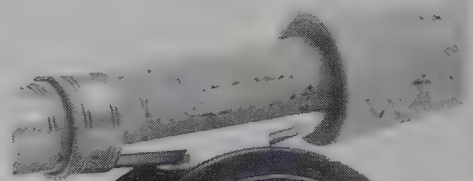
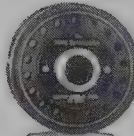
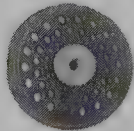
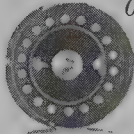
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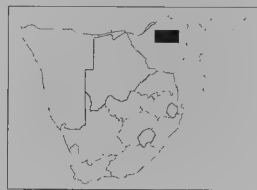
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By Clive Harris



THE MOST COMMON LARGEMOUTH BREAM found within the borders of Zimbabwe is the “robbie” or nembwe (*Serranochromis robustus*) that is indigenous to the upper Zambezi and most major rivers in Zambia.

The Victoria Falls forms a natural barrier that prevented this specie from spreading downriver. However, with the help of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the robbie was introduced to other bodies of water in the country in the early seventies. They are now found in many of the major river systems and dams, both private and public, and are sought after as one of the most exciting predator species after tigerfish and bass.

Other largemouth bream such as the thinface (*S. angusticeps*) and brownspot (*S. thumbergi*) are also endemic to the upper Zambezi and it is in this area that flyfishing has been practised for many years. The stretch of river between Victoria Falls and the Zambezi-Chobe confluence is generally accessible to anglers but a good place to start is at Impalila Island. Local lodge guide, Simon Parker, advises casting at specific structures such as submerged trees or reed banks rather than the open mud banks that most people troll past. A sinking line is used with baitfish imitations such as Deceivers, Zonkers and Clouser’s Minnows. The LSD fly is a particular favourite of mine. It is tied on a size 3 or 4 hook with a stocking head, gold bead eyes and a Flashabou body and tail. Further downstream, at the head of the Katambora Rapids, Imbabala Lodge offers guided fishing on a long stretch of “lazy” river with deep pools as well as rock-hopping down the rapids. June to December are the best months for bream in this area. Similar fishing is also available from the National Parks Camp at Victoria Falls. The forty odd kilometres of game park road from the park entrance upstream has numerous picnic sites and some splendid angling.

For Harare-based anglers Lake Chivero is the nearest public water. Boats are necessary because bank fishing is restricted but there are many boat clubs on the lake that welcome visitors and offer launching facilities. Lake Manyame (formerly Darwendale) lies downstream of Chivero and has a National Parks campsite at the dam wall with launching facilities. Booking is not necessary and park fees can be paid

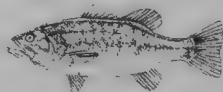




on site. At the time of writing (September, 1997) the lake was full and the many kilometres of shoreline was teeming with robbies in the 300- to 400- gram range eager to take a fly. Their main food sources appear to be minnows, snails and insects such as dragonfly nymphs. Woolly Buggers, Clouser's Minnows and Kaufmann's Dragons have been the most successful flies. Bright orange seems to be a favourite colour so fishing a Red Setter or Orangeade on a dropper often results in a double hook-up.

Flies for robbies are normally fished on sinking lines but floating lines are necessary when using bulky surface bugs such as Sneaky Petes, Peeter Poppers or hair bugs. Subsurface bass bugs such as Dipsey Divers, Dahlberg Divers and Wiggle Opens also produce. With all the new wing materials now available one can experiment with dozens of different patterns.

The patterns listed above are sold under the ARK label and are available throughout Zimbabwe. For tackle and information on flyfishing conditions and venues around the country contact the Master Angler in Harare at either Borrowdale Village or the Westgate complex.



By Charles Norman



**M**OST FLYRODDERS ONLY DECIDE TO try the long rod for bass after years of fishing for trout, and inevitably they bring with them a trout-fishing mindset. This is the first mistake. A bass is not a trout, and never the twain shall meet – at least, that’s what all owners of trout waters fervently hope. Such meetings would almost always favour the bass, unless the trout is very large and the bass very small. Understanding why this is so is the key to flyrodding for bass.

Trout were designed by nature to take hundreds of tiny morsels of food over a period of several hours, and as a result have relatively small mouths. Bass, on the other hand, would prefer to consume only one large meal every few days, if they could, and are equipped with a mouth that makes this possible. A 1-kilogram bass could swallow a 200-gram trout like a jelly baby, but the reverse is not true.

The flyfisherman who casts trout flies on a bass water will certainly catch fish, sometimes on every cast. But they will be little fish, fingerlings. A large bass, in general, just isn’t going to make the effort to chase after something as insignificant as a conventional trout fly. Sure, he’ll vacuum it in if it comes right past his nose. But he (or she) won’t cross the street to get it. To get Mr Bass excited, you’ve got to throw him what looks like a serious meal. A large, eel-like streamer fished deep will do the trick. So will something like a big Dahlberg Diver, or any of the other modern diving/wiggling flies, usually made with epoxy bodies. The purist might contend that using such creations is not really flyfishing at all, but lure fishing. A hotly debatable point, but not what I’m here to discuss – I’m just talking about what will attract bass to the business end of a fly rod. For my own part, I fish surface poppers – bass bugs – almost exclusively. I do so not because this is necessarily the most productive method, but because one knee-trembling surface strike from a large bass is, in my book, worth half a dozen invisible takes in the deep.

With bugging, the object is to find a bug that puffs out in the water to give maximum size, yet is fairly streamlined while in the air, making it not too difficult to cast (bass bugs are never easy!). I prefer soft, furry-bodied bugs to hard cork bodies – bass can hit and eject a hard lure faster than you’d believe, whereas they tend to hang



onto the softies just that fraction longer. And I definitely prefer a bug with a simple nylon weedguard tied in, since I'll usually be fishing either along the edges of weedbeds or over the top of them (especially when the water has recently risen, and the weeds haven't yet had time to reach up to the new level). Don't be in a hurry with a bass bug. If you feel you're in a bassy spot, let it float for minutes at a time, and then give it the barest twitch. I have seen a bass lying with its nose virtually touching a bug for several minutes, trying to make up its mind. In such circumstances, the merest suggestion of a twitch is more likely to bring results than a fierce bloop.

In the long run, fishing deep is probably more productive. Again a weedguard is a definite plus, because for best results you actually need to be rubbing that streamer fly or plastic worm look-alike right against the structure, be it rocks, submerged trees or a weedline. Do not expect vicious takes. Strikes are often little more than a mushy weight on the line, especially if the fish is a big one – little bass hit a lure and run off like barnyard chickens; big ones often vacuum it in while totally stationary. Whether on the surface or deep, do not fish for bass with the kind of 5X tippet you might use for trout. To use less than a 5-kilogram point is an insult to a bass, unless you're in very open water with no weeds, trees or other structure. I am not saying a bass is a superior fighter to a trout. Far from it. When it comes to stamina, a trout is infinitely superior. But trout in my experience normally fight like gentlemen, either staying in open water or at least often reversing themselves out of trouble if given the chance. Bass are down-and-out street fighters, and tremendously powerful in their initial rush; once hooked they will head straight for the nearest trouble, and if you cannot control them during those vital first ten seconds, they are likely to bury themselves so deep in structure that not even their own mothers can find them.

Tackle? Given the above, I initially started fishing for bass with an 8-weight outfit. I did so for two reasons. Firstly, I felt I needed that power, and secondly, it was the only rod I had. That was some years back, and nowadays I normally use a 3-weight. Sure, it doesn't cast as far, and it assumes the most alarming shapes when I really have to apply pressure. But you don't need much more than that; I'd say a 5/6-weight is ideal.

Where in Gauteng, Northern Province and Mpumulanga should one try the fly-rod for bass? Mpumulanga being the most productive province, let's start there (**Figure 17**).

#### **HEYSHOPE DAM (10)**

My first choice would be Heyshope Dam, on the Assegai River, to the south of Route R29 between Ermelo and Piet Retief in the southeast of the province. This dam was "hot" during the late eighties, died off somewhat in the early nineties, and is now staging a comeback. The very best fishing is in the upper reaches, for which one needs a boat, but wading in the public areas near the dam wall can also be productive. The dam is in an area which is subject to rapid changes in weather. Boat anglers should be particularly alert and careful as violent storms can blow up quite suddenly.

#### **JERICO (11) AND MORGENSTOND (12) DAMS**

In the same area, but to the north of the Ermelo-Piet Retief road, are Jericho and Morgenstond dams, 5 kilometres apart. Jericho is on the Mpama, a tributary of the Ngwempisi River and is accessed most readily from Route R65 between Ermelo and Amsterdam. It has been a steady producer of bass over several decades, and there are large areas of shoreline on both sides of the wall that can be waded. Morgenstond, on the Ngwempisi, is the younger dam and is accessible from either Route R29 or R65. It was very productive in the early eighties but then died off. The wall has now been heightened, vastly increasing the water area and inundating standing timber, so it should start improving again.

#### **NOOITGEDACHT DAM (13)**

Nootgedacht Dam about 10 kilometres north of Carolina produces some very big bass, and is another water with an easily fishable shoreline.

#### **MIDDELBURG DAM**

This impoundment lies a few kilometres east of the town on the old main road to the Kruger National Park. It has both largemouth and smallmouth bass, and is another good early season producer, though the shore fishing area is fairly limited.

#### **WITBANK DAM**

Also known as the Doringpoort Dam, this water lies to the south of the N4 just east of Witbank. It has only largemouth bass and here too there is not a great deal of shore fishing area.





**KWENA DAM (28, FIGURE 3)**

This is the former Braam Raubenheimer Dam and it lies just off the Machadodorp-Lydenburg road. It was a superb bass dam, with no carp or catfish at all until it mysteriously became infested with them around the time that the nearby Provincial Hatchery at Lydenburg closed. Kwena suffered badly during the drought years and bass fishing came to a virtual standstill. It has filled in the meantime and the bass population is rebounding. At its peak this dam produced some very big bass but also had a huge population of small bass. Large areas of fishable shoreline make it the ideal place to hone one's bassing skills on the flyrod.

**OHRIGSTAD DAM (27, FIGURE 3)**

This dam lies to the south of route 533 heading west out of Pilgrim's Rest and has only smallmouth bass. Steeply sloping banks make it difficult to fish the shore but it can be productive in early spring. September is a good month.

There are several good waters in the Nelspruit-White River area (Figure 17) which, because of their lower altitude, also produce some bass during winter when Highveld fish are virtually uncatchable. Danie Joubert (14) and Da Gama (15) lie to the west and east, respectively, of the R40 between White River and Hazyview whereas Witklip (16) is south of the R537 between Nelspruit and Sabie.

**TZANEEN DAM (7, FIGURE 2)**

In the Northern Province this, the former Fanie Botha Dam, would be a first choice. Tzaneen Dam is another one of those large impoundments which was highly productive in the early eighties, degenerated to little more than a stream during the drought years, but is now full and fishing very well. It is surrounded by forests and full of timber so be prepared to pull hard on any large bass you hook, or kiss it goodbye!

**EBENEZER DAM (4, FIGURE 2)**

This smaller but very deep dam lies in thick forest near Haenertsburg just south of the Pieterburg-Tzaneen road. It is another good smallmouth water that also holds trout and indigenous fish species. Because of the steep sides it is best fished from a boat or float-tube.

In Gauteng the Roodeplaat Dam to the east of Pretoria has bass, but they've never really taken in this highly polluted water, which also has very little accessible

shoreline. West of Pretoria, Hartebeespoort Dam has more bass than most people realise, but little Buffelspoort Dam, in the Magaliesberg near Rustenburg is better, provided you can fish it in the week, because it is a small water and at weekends the skiers make life difficult. In or around Johannesburg there is no quality bassing, but those wanting to hone their casting skills and catch a few small bass should try Westdene or Emmarentia Dams.

**VAAL RIVER (11, FIGURE 16)**

The best bass water close to Johannesburg is the impounded 80 kilometre stretch of Vaal River between Vaal Dam and the Barrage, but fishing this water without a boat is virtually impossible, the land on both banks being mostly private property. Densely overhung by weeping willows and fringed with reeds, this water is a challenge to any art-lure angler, whether fly or conventional. Unfortunately, it is another water which, at weekends, becomes a churning maelstrom of skiers and pleasure (?) boaters for whom anglers are obviously not noisy or bad-mannered enough to be classed as a life form. The Vaal River downstream of the Barrage is now also well populated with bass, a fact which those flyfishermen visiting this area in search of yellowfish would do well to note. You are not generally going to find the lazy largemouth bass in those waters favoured by yellows; look for them in the quieter, weedier backwaters.

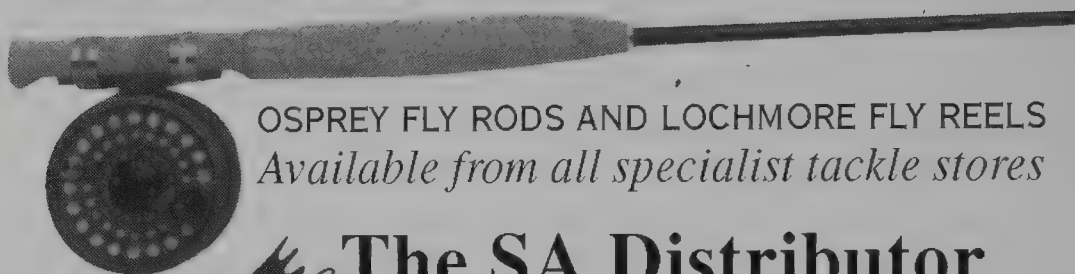
**BOSKOP DAM (12, FIGURE 16)**

This water, alongside the R501 between Carltonville and Potchefstroom in North West Province, has both largemouth and smallmouth bass as well as the prettiest smallmouth yellowfish you'll see anywhere. Extremely heavily weeded, it is difficult to fish because no outboard motors can be used – a float-tube is the answer. It does contain very big largemouth and smallmouth bass, but you're more likely to catch numbers of small fish. Continuing westward, Klerkskraal Dam alongside the Tarlton-Ventersdorp road has good bass though fish over a kilo are rare. This very attractive, shallow water, reminiscent of the Okavango Swamp, is surrounded by impenetrable reedbeds and can only be fished from a small boat or float-tube.





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By Cliff Rochester



**N**ATAL, NO DOUBT HAS SOME OF the best bass water in the country, with prime public venues situated close to the capital city of Pietermaritzburg as well as countless farm ponds easily accessible through the right avenues

(Figure 5).

#### **MIDMAR DAM (25)**

Midmar is 23 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg on the N3 and is run by the Natal Parks Board (NPB). Being at a slightly higher altitude and fractionally cooler than Albert Falls Dam, Midmar provides good habitat for smallmouth as well as spotted and largemouth bass. Although the smallmouth and the spots are outnumbered by the largemouth, there are still numbers to be caught. Visible structure is limited but rocky banks and the odd wattle tree provide good fishing. The best flies to use are the Whitlock Waterpup-type as well as lead-eye Zonkers tied to imitate worms. At the cascades where the uMgeni enters the dam, rocky banks with deep water close by are likely places to find both spotted and smallmouth bass. Baitfish imitations often produce well here. Midmar is very popular and is a good venue for the family. It is more commercialised than the typical Parks Board operation with a restaurant, swimming pool and numerous braai sites. Smart chalets which are very well equipped and camp sites provide accommodation.

Call. (0331) 47-1981 for information and reservations.

#### **CRAIGIEBURN DAM (26)**

The clear waters of Craigieburn, approximately 36 kilometres from Mooi River on the Greytown road, are known to have caused anglers great frustration. The best time of the year would be November, due to the high altitude and colder water. Bluegill imitations, topwater bugs and slider-type flies have scored well for me on this dam. As the summer rains arrive and the water rises into the grass, weedless Dahlberg Divers in blue or black, worked aggressively through the flooded vegetation, are a good option. Accommodation is limited to camp sites with ablution blocks and showers. Bookings must be handled through the NPB on (0331) 47-1981.

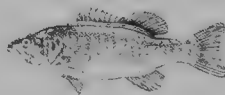




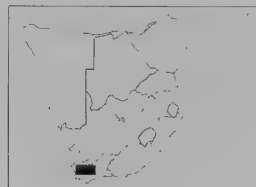
### **ALBERT FALLS RESOURCES RESERVE (27)**

Albert Falls Dam which borders on the small town of Cramond, stretches across to the banks of Otto's Bluff and is 18 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg on the New Hanover Road. The bass fishing in the dam improved significantly after the 1987 floods, when many farm ponds above lost their walls, thus inadvertently stocking Albert Falls with the Florida strain of bass that had been introduced by farmers. Numerous fish of over 4 kilograms and some of 5 kilograms have been caught to date on conventional tackle. Flyfishing at Albert Falls can be excellent in September/October when the large female bass start to spawn. Top-water bugs like Dahlberg Divers, balsa poppers and deerhair bugs annoy the spawning fish and goad them into striking. A boat or float-tube is advantageous but not essential. Towards the end of summer the tilapia fry hatch and are easy prey for the bass. Size 4 Dahlberg Divers, worked quickly, are particularly effective.

The resort has well-maintained slipways, camp sites and chalets, as well as a game park. At Notuli there are clean thatched rondavels, and just down the road is the camp site with hot and cold water provided. Bookings are handled through Msinsi Holdings on (033) 569-1202 or fax (033) 569-1371.



By Mike Dohlhoff



THE WESTERN CAPE IS BLESSED with some of the finest largemouth and smallmouth bass fishing in the country (**Figure 15**). Although much of this is on private property and difficult but not impossible to access, there is plenty that is readily available to the public. Stillwaters make up the bulk of this fishery, but river fishing, mainly for smallmouth bass, is available. Owing to the fairly harsh winter, fishing is generally restricted to the summer months with spring and autumn being prime. No official season exists but a provincial fishing licence is required.

A 7- or 8-weight outfit with a floating weight-forward line will cover most situations although some impoundments can be fished deeper. Hairbugs, poppers and large bushy flies are most commonly used. Some of the impoundments such as Clanwilliam and Theewaterskloof Dams are so large that a boat is desirable to reach the more remote areas. Other waters can be waded or tubed effectively. Generally speaking bass are not very selective when hungry. Flies should function properly rather than “match the hatch”, so to speak. For most largemouth and smallmouth bass fishing surface patterns such as hairbugs, Dahlberg Divers and cork or foam poppers are most productive, especially in the mornings and evenings. Colour is not critical although more natural tones seem to work better. Productive subsurface patterns include olive or black Woolly Buggers, large dragonfly nymph imitations, olive, black or purple Zonkers and Mrs Simpsons, all in sizes 2 to 4. Chartreuse and yellow Clouser Minnows score well in rivers. There is no hard-and-fast rule regarding fly pattern and size. Productive flies seem to work wherever bass are found and seldom do specific patterns work only on specific waters. When fishing for bass larger imitations are usually more effective.

#### CLANWILLIAM DAM (16)

This dam is situated on the Olifants River in the spectacular Cederberg about three hours drive north of Cape Town. It fishes well over a prolonged period because the summer is much warmer than elsewhere in the Western Cape. August to June are good months although this may vary from year to year. The water is very clear and the



dam is set in magnificent surroundings which make it one of the prime smallmouth fishing venues in the country. All standard surface methods work in the mornings and evenings, but during the brighter periods of the day, subsurface techniques produce the goods. The inlet area is a good spot for largemouth bass and more rarely for Clanwilliam yellowfish. Hotel accommodation is available in the village and camping at the Clanwilliam Resort by the dam. A boat is advantageous on a dam this size but tubing and shore fishing are also good. Owing to the steep sides of the dam only a few areas are suitable for wading.

Call the Clanwilliam Municipality on (027) 482-2133 for more information.

#### **BULSHOEK DAM (17)**

The Bulshoek Dam is also on the Olifants River 10 kilometres downstream of Clanwilliam. It is smaller than Clanwilliam Dam and ideally suited to tubing or canoeing. For the rest the same comments apply as for Clanwilliam. Bungalows and camping are available.

Phone Hilda Compion at (027) 482-2635 for details.

#### **MISVERSTAND DAM (18)**

This impoundment is on the Berg River about 110 kilometres north of Cape Town on the N7. The water is generally murky so surface fishing is the way to go, but do not ignore fishing below surface with large bushy or noisy flies – it always pays to experiment! The river inlet, sand banks and the “bucket” below the dam wall are worth trying. Besides largemouth and smallmouth bass, tilapia, carp and spotted bass are all likely targets. Accommodation is available at Elani River Resort.

For more information phone Joey at (0264) 38172.

#### **VOËLVLEI (19)**

A large canal system from the Berg River feeds this stillwater that lies just east of the R44 near Gouda. It is a superb smallmouth fishery ideally suited to wading, tubing or boating (electric motors only). Voëlvlei is on average three to five meters deep and therefore ideal for flyfishing. Large Woolly Buggers, Mrs Simpsons and dragonfly nymph imitations fished on sinking lines are excellent choices. An added bonus is the chance of taking a large carp on fly in spring. A word of caution: wind can be a major problem owing to the exposed nature of this water. Day permits are required to fish Voëlvlei and can be obtained by phoning Jean at the Cape Piscatorial Society on (021) 24-7725.

For overnight accommodation phone Bernd Muller at Silverfontein on (0236) 32-0531.

### **THEEWATERSKLOOF DAM (20)**

This reservoir lies in a basin surrounded by the Villiersdorp and Franschhoek Mountains and was built on the Riviersonderend, the major tributary of the Breede River. Rainfall of as much as 3 000 millimetres per annum in the catchment area ensures that it is seldom less than 75% full. Theewaterskloof holds largemouth black bass, some rainbow trout and bluegill sunfish. Snow in the surrounding mountains causes low water temperatures from late May until August and during this period flyfishing is poor. Surface fishing in spring, in areas where the water temperature has reached 16°C, is exceptional and bass in excess of 3 kilograms are caught quite frequently. A boat is preferable, if not essential, on this large water. Tubing and wading can be done once a suitable area has been reached. Extensive structure is present almost throughout the shallow areas. To reach the dam follow the Theewater Sports Club (TSC) signs from Villiersdorp. Only the area below the Draaiberg Bridge is open to the public but special permits can be obtained from TSC to fish above the bridge. Also find out from TSC about camping facilities. Hotel accommodation is available at Villiersdorp about 3 kilometres away.

For information phone Theewater Sports Club at (0225) 31334.

### **BREEDERIVER**

The Breede River System is the largest in the Western Cape Province. From near Ceres it winds its way in a southeasterly direction to Cape Infanta – a distance of more than 200 kilometres. Only the 40-kilometre tidal section does not contain black bass. As is normally the case, the faster water is preferred smallmouth habitat whereas the slower pools are home to largemouth. Due to its large catchment the river can come down in flood very quickly and remain high for long periods from June to November. The prime fishing time is September to November, provided the river level is not too high. Heads and tails of pools are especially productive. In midsummer the water is often too warm and the bass become sluggish, feeding only in the early morning and evening. Low water during the dry season from December to May can also make for tricky navigation. Unfortunately access to the river is mostly through private farmland but special permission may be obtained through personal contact. The venues that follow are all open to the public.





### **BREEDER ESCAPE (21)**

From Bonnievale take the road to Stormsvlei for a couple of kilometres and turn left to Gelukshoop. Follow the gravel road for 7,5 kilometres and turn left again at the Doornkloof sign. Breeder Escape has about 200 metres of river frontage but anglers can bring their own craft or hire inflatable canoes to fish the river as far upstream or downstream as they wish. Accommodation is available in a self-catering cottage for five or in the Boskamp that has 6 reed rondavels, a lapa and an ablution block. No day visitors are allowed. Phone Christa van der Merwe at (02346) 2995 for information and reservations..

### **KINGFISHER COTTAGES (22)**

This establishment is on the Breeder River on the outskirts of Bonnievale on the Robertson side. Two self-catering Victorian style cottages can each sleep four persons whereas the Honeymoon Cottage sleeps its expected complement. Each cottage has its own boat. No day visitors are permitted. For full information, call Glynis or Lisa on (02346) 2636 or on cell 082 553 0415.

### **DE RUST (23)**

This farm is one kilometre west of Bonnievale. The owner has access to a total of approximately 20 kilometres on the Breeder River. At present there is a caravan site which is only open to groups but plans are afoot to build a cottage complex that will be open to the public. The first cottages are expected to be completed in time for the summer of 1998/99. For complete details phone Francois or Linda Claasen on (02346) 2444 or cell 082 569 9415.

### **GUIDING**

For more information on the venues above and for guide services phone James Warne at (021) 794-5713 or Keith Tait at (021) 448-3070.



By Richard Schumann



he KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) coast offers the flyrodder a greater variety of fishing than anywhere else in South Africa. From offshore big game such as marlin, queenfish, dorado and tuna to the inshore heavies like kingfish and albacore, there is enough fishing to buckle any 12-weight. There are plenty of light-tackle opportunities as well, from wild shad blitzes in the rolling surf, to quietly stalking calm shallows, where skill levels required will match those needed on the most difficult of trout streams.

The North Coast is a long, relatively undeveloped coastline with long sandy beaches, punctuated by rock ledges and headlands. The warm tropical Agulhas Current flows south along the coast and the open beaches are exposed to strong oceanic swells and currents. Kosi Bay on the northern border with Mozambique is protected from these elements and is one of the finest estuaries in the country. It has become the mecca of estuary flyrodders but its popularity is due mainly to the fact that it has enjoyed far more media exposure than the no less spectacular or productive Lake St Lucia to the south.

#### **KOSI BAY TO ST LUCIA ESTUARY (FIGURE 19)**

Kosi Bay is a unique and beautiful series of four interlinked lakes joined to the sea via a long estuary that is renowned for the size of the giant kingfish that inhabit its shores. Fish of over 30 kilograms have been landed on live baits and few sights are more awesome than seeing these “garage doors” slamming into mullet shoals on the calm, shallow edges of the lakes. Most flyrodders visiting the lake system are light tackle enthusiasts and rely on the plentiful springer (skipjack), rock salmon, green-spotted kingfish and barracuda for their sport. Some even spend fruitless hours stalking tailing grunter in the clear shallows of Lake One hoping one day to crack the code of these selective and wary fish. The best time to fish the lake system is in summer, when most of the action is on or near the surface. However parts of Third Lake are over 30 metres deep and anglers should be equipped to fish deep if there is no surface action.

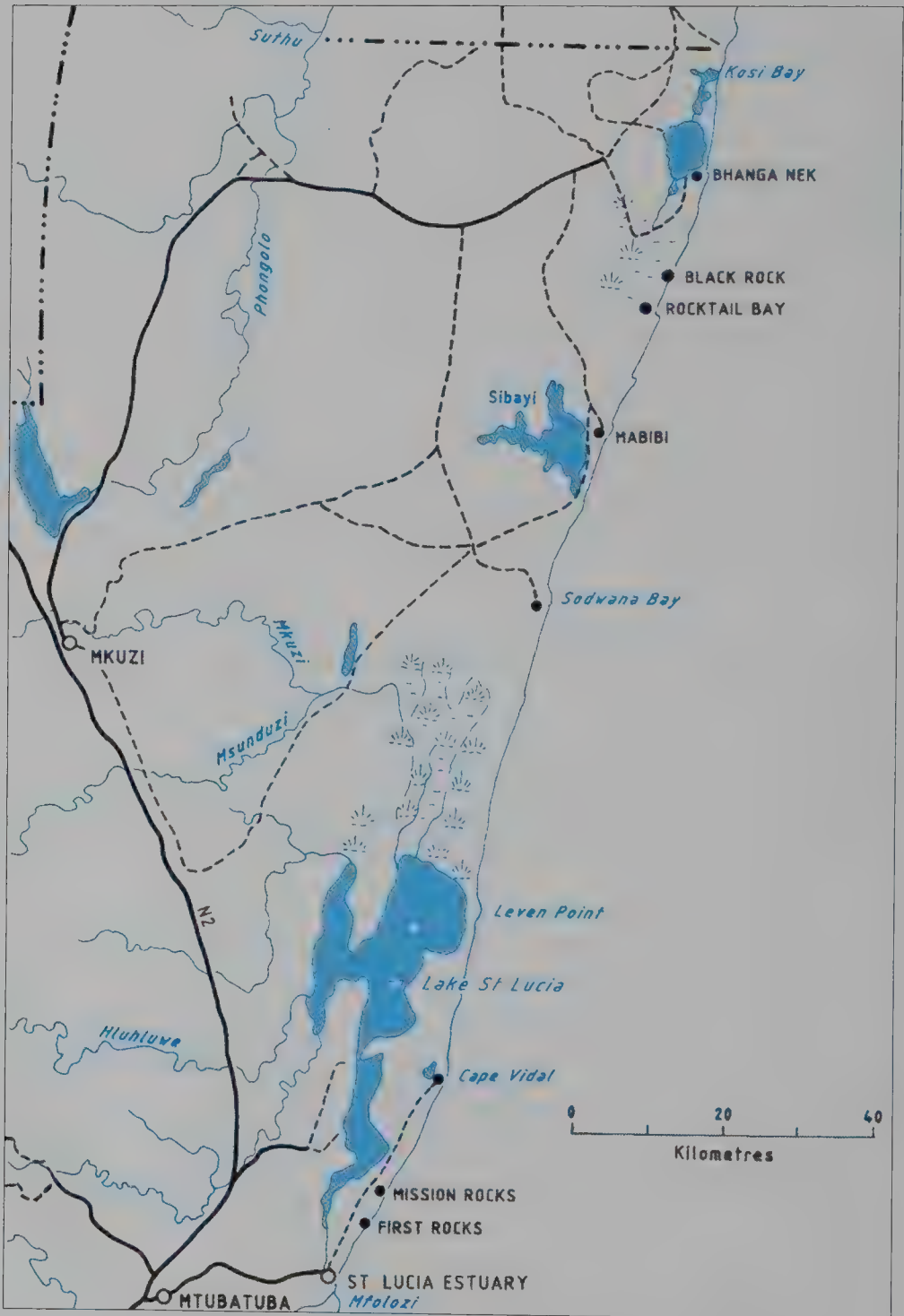


FIGURE 19: SALTWATER FLYFISHING VENUES ALONG THE KWAZULU COAST

Kosi Mouth and Bhanga Nek are two excellent surf-angling venues accessible from Kosi Bay. The mouth can only be reached in a 4x4 and the trip takes about 1½ hours from the campsite on Third Lake. The beach to the north of the mouth can yield good catches of springer, green-spotted kingfish, stumpnose, pompano and bonefish and the reef on the south bank is excellent for big kingfish. Bhanga Nek is on the seaward side of the eastern shore of Third Lake and offers superb angling from the beach or rocks. There is one Parks Board camp and two privately run lodges for visitors but no boating or guiding services are available locally.

Several rocky points between Kosi Bay and Sodwana Bay offer good fishing. These are Black Rock, Rocktail Bay, Mabibi and Nine Mile. Although rocky ledges holding fish can be encountered all along this section, access to the beach is via the Natal Parks Board at Sodwana or at Rocktail Bay and only 4x4 vehicles with permits are allowed. Campsites as well as lodge accommodation are available at Sodwana whereas Rocktail Bay features an upmarket wilderness lodge.

At Sodwana offshore anglers can fish for marlin, sailfish and other tropical species like dorado, tuna and king mackerel and periodically the bay has very good shore fishing for the same species found at Kosi Mouth and Bhanga Nek. As the bay is used as a launch and beaching site for ski-boats, anglers need to fish before and after the heavy boat traffic.

The stretch of coast from Cape Vidal southward has superb rock and surf, as well as estuary fishing at Lake St Lucia. The rocks, ledges and long sandy beaches produce fine catches of kingfish, queenfish, kob, stumpnose, pompano, bonefish, springer and shad and, to add to the variety, garrick (leerfish or leervis) make an appearance in winter. First Rocks, Mission Rocks, Cape Vidal and the beaches up to Leven Point can be accessed with a 4x4 vehicle from St Lucia. Despite this abundance of surf fishing it is the estuary that attracts most anglers. The St Lucia Estuary is famous for its grunter run but kob, springer, ox-eye tarpon and perch are the most common flyrod targets. It is a large body of water containing crocodiles and hippos, so wading here can seriously damage your health. Boat hire for the estuary as well as offshore is available, but no local guiding services. At Vidal there is only a campsite and a few log cabins whereas the town of St Lucia is well geared toward the holidaymaker, offering plenty of services and amenities including hotels, campsites, holiday flats and bed-and-breakfast facilities.



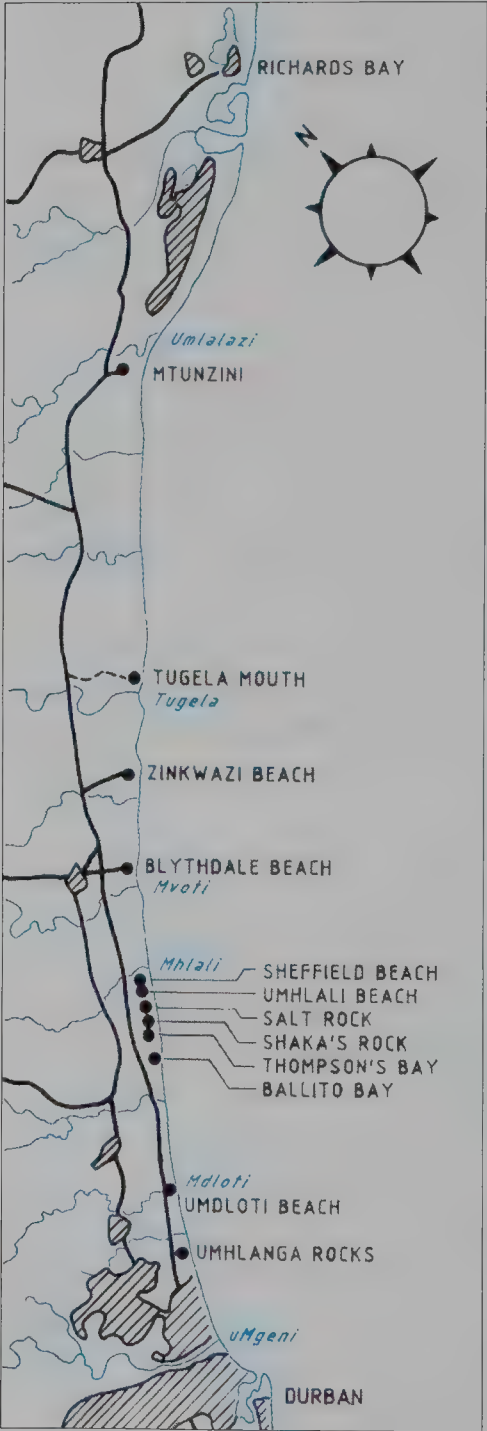


FIGURE 20A: FLYFISHING VENUES ALONG THE NORTH COAST, KZN.

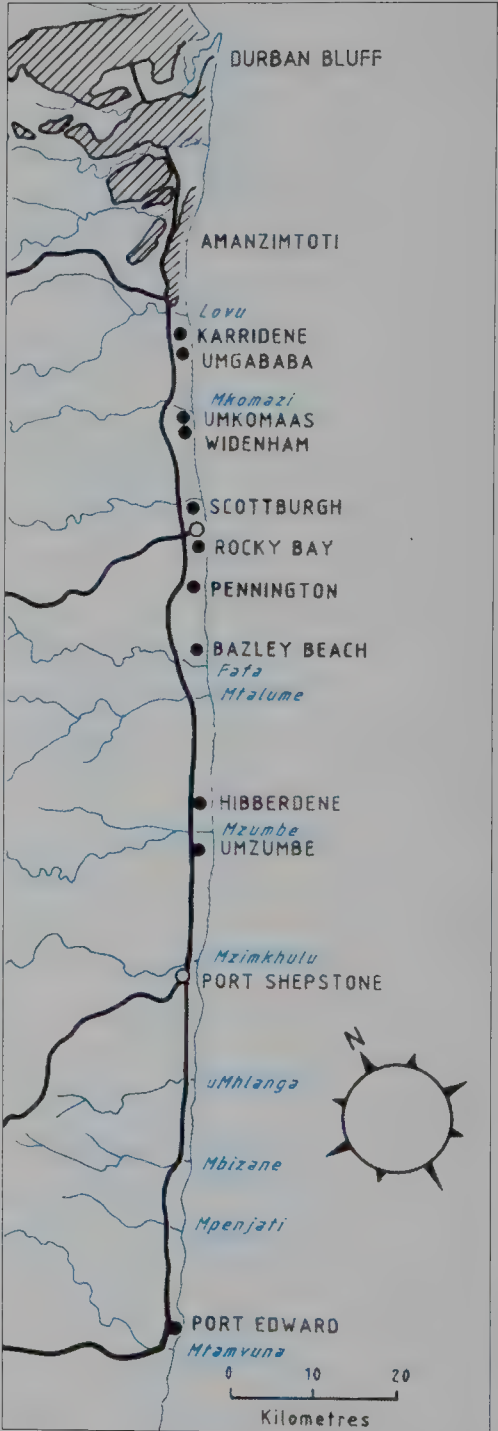


FIGURE 20B: FLYFISHING VENUES ALONG THE SOUTH COAST, KZN.

**RICHARDS BAY TO DURBAN (FIGURE 20A)**

The Richards Bay Harbour and new mouth are popular haunts of members of the locally based Ox-eye Tarpon Fly Fishing Club, who fish these waters with great success. Springer, kingfish, garrick, queenfish and ox-eye tarpon can be caught from licenced boats or the northern breakwater but shore anglers need to contact the Club to access the best areas inside the harbour and new mouth. Richards Bay is a rapidly growing town and offers a wide range of accommodation and amenities to the visiting angler.

At Mtunzini, about 40 kilometres to the southwest, a long expanse of sandy beach can produce good fishing for pompano and stumpnose. Here there are no sheltered bays so if conditions are not favourable one can fish the Mlalazi Estuary nearby for kob, perch, rock salmon and the odd kingfish or garrick. Anglers visiting Mtunzini can stay at the hotel or at the Umlalazi Nature Reserve. Along this coastline patches of rocky shore divide the sandy beaches at more frequent intervals than further north. The long sandy beaches continue down as far as Zinkwazi Beach with the only angling spot of significance being the Tugela Mouth where in winter, when the water is cleaner, shad, garrick and kob can provide excellent sport. There is dirt-road access to the north and south banks, both with campsites.

Productive rock formations begin just north of Zinkwazi, and continue intermittently all the way to Durban. Many of these ledges are perfect for flyfishing. Kingfish, garrick, springer, kob and shad are the primary targets in this area and some impressive fish have been taken on fly. There are well over thirty recognised and accessible rock exposures suitable for flyfishing along this stretch whereas others are closely guarded secrets or have private access only. The beaches and river mouths also produce good catches of pompano, stumpnose, shad and kob. Zinkwazi Beach, Blythdale Beach, Sheffield Beach, Umhlali, Salt Rock, Shaka's Rock, Thompson's Bay and Ballito Bay are all popular holiday resorts with excellent surf fishing and good amenities for the visitor. There are also numerous ski-boat-launching sites for anglers wanting to sample the excellent fare of bonito, king mackerel, dorado, queenfish, kingfish, springer and queen mackerel in off shore waters.

Although there is good fishing from Ballito to Umdloti Beach there is not too much in the way of sheltered bays, but during calmer conditions it is possible to fish along the beaches and rock outcrops. From Umdloti there is a section of beach and



COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
KINGFISH	CARANX SPP.												
DORADO	CORYPHAENA HIPPURUS												
QUEENFISH	SCOMBEROIDES SPP.												
TUNA	THUNNUS SPP.												
COMMON BUT UNPREDICTABLE													
KING MACKEREL	SCOMBEROMORUS COMMERSON												
QUEEN MACKEREL	SCOMBEROMORUS PLURILINEATUS												
SAILFISH	ISTIOPHORUS PLATYPTERUS												
STRIPED MARLIN	TETRAPTURUS AUDAX												
GRUNTER	POMADASYs COMMERSONNII												
SPRINGER	ELOPS MACHNATA												
LEERVIS / GARRICK	LICHIA AMIA												
ELF / SHAD	POMATOMUS SALTATRIX												
YELLOWFISH	SERIOLA LALANDI												

TABLE 1 RELATIVE SEASONAL ABUNDANCE OF CERTAIN KWAZULU-NATAL FISH SPECIES

rocky shore that runs all the way to Umhlanga Rocks which has many ideal spots from which to throw a fly. Unfortunately at Umdloti flyanglers have been incorrectly identified by the local authority as part and parcel of the sloppy, messy bait-fishing mob and fishing is restricted to between 05:00 and 08:00 and from 16:00 to 19:00 in places and completely banned in others. One cannot blame the local authority for this, as the mess left behind by South African bait-fishermen is unbelievable at times. The same restrictions exist at Umhlanga Rocks. Fortunately the windows of opportunity coincide with peak fishing times and flyrodders have taken some good-sized kingfish, garrick and shad. Umdloti and Umhlanga are both popular holiday resorts and offer everything from basic campsites to 5-star luxury. There is also good offshore flyfishing and charters can be booked from most hotels.

A long beach runs all the way from Umhlanga to Durban, broken only by the mouth of the uMgeni River. The deep holes and channels that run close to shore along this beach produce garrick, stumpnose and pompano. The best fishing though is to be had on the north bank of the uMgeni River, which can be reached via a long walk from north of the mangroves. Flyanglers regularly ply the surf here for garrick, springer, shad and kingfish, as well as pompano and stumpnose. South of the uMgeni River to the North Pier of Durban Harbour is the so called “Golden Mile” of bathing beaches, high-rise hotels and various other tourist attractions altogether too busy for flyfishing. The North and South Piers at the entrance to the harbour though are excellent deep-water venues for big gamefish.

Every day during the summer months, light tackle enthusiasts can be seen wading the shallow sandbanks of Durban Bay. Here, in the heart of the busiest port in the country, they stalk springer, queenfish, kingfish, garrick and queen mackerel with great success. Good wading can be had at the mangroves, centre banks, the bank between Wilson’s Wharf and the Yacht Mole, next to the Maritime Museum and the Turning Basin bank. Although local flyrodders blatantly defy the law with what they claim is “just cause”, it is illegal to wade the banks and from time to time anglers are stopped by the Water Police, Navy or Private Security Companies and told to leave the area. This usually happens at the Turning Basin when large bunker oil spills occur due to negligence or when operators of dockside installations wish to discharge waste into the bay, out of the public eye.





There are plenty of offshore opportunities for the visitor to Durban. Charter boats are available for hunting dorado, king mackerel, bonito, tuna, queenfish and queen mackerel. The marlin season (November to March) can be very good and a small fleet of well-equipped boats operates out of the harbour. Striped marlin are most prevalent with small blacks making up the bulk of the remainder. Most of these fish are in the 60- to 100-kilogram range and although none have been landed IGFA legal on fly, a few have been teased up and hooked. Boats can be booked through the Durban Charter Boat Owners Association on (031) 301-1115.

From Durban Bluff southwards, the coastline changes character and rocky headlands frequently divide short beaches, forming scores of protected bays, coves, gullies and deep-water points. The sea temperature is a little lower than along the north coast and tropical fish are not found inshore in any great numbers much beyond Hibberdene. In winter though, this coastline enjoys good runs of shad, garrick, kingfish, kob and albacore. Just about every little bay along this coast has a village or resort, all offering some form of accommodation, from five-star golf estates to campsites. To name them all, let alone the popular flyfishing venues, is not feasible. But a brief overview would give the visiting angler an even chance of getting fish due to the close proximity and easy access one has to just about all the beaches.

#### **DURBAN TO PORT EDWARD (FIGURE 20B)**

The coastline from the base of South Pier to Amanzimtoti is typical of the south coast: short beaches alternating with rocky shores. Kingfish, springer, garrick and shad are regularly caught from the rocks and there is good fishing for pompano and stumpnose from the beaches. Because it lies between Durban and Amanzimtoti, another high density holiday resort, this area can get crowded with bait and spin fisherman, when large numbers of fish are moving. South of Amanzimtoti, down to the mouth of the Mkomazi River, the sand beaches are much longer and pompano and stumpnose provide most of the action. The rock ledges at Karridene, Golden Rocks and Umgababa Point produce shad, kingfish and garrick. A word of warning - the stretch from Karridene to the north bank of the Mkomazi River is not considered safe and visitors should contact the local Upper South Coast Fly Fishing Club on (031) 94-1202 before venturing into this area.

Between Umkomaas and Hibberdene there are more areas to explore and fish than your average local could cover in a year. They are easily accessible from the main road and tourist amenities range from hotels in the larger towns to campsites and caravan parks behind every other headland. Not only are plenty of big kingfish taken on fly along this coast but there are also good runs of garrick, springer, albacore and shad. Widenham, Scottburgh, Rocky Bay, Pennington, Bazley Beach and Hibberdene are popular venues. Anglers venturing forth from these resorts have kilometres of quickly changing coastline to explore and in a single outing can expect to find anything from beaches to gullies, bays and deep-water points to river mouths. For the offshore flyfisherman reefs like Aliwal Shoal and Landers are good prospects and often yield fine catches of king mackerel, queenfish, tuna, albacore and bonito. Closer to the backline excellent catches of queen mackerel and springer are made. Most charter boats operate out of Umkomaas and cater for the diving fraternity, but anglers can contact the ski-boat clubs at Umkomaas, Rocky Bay, Pennington and Hibberdene and arrange offshore fishing trips

The best time to fish the section of coast from Umzumbe southwestwards is in winter when the inshore runs of shad, garrick, kob and albacore usually coincide with the famous sardine run. Fishing at this time can be as hectic as it is frustrating. Find yourself in the right place at the right time and it will blow your socks off, but it is always a guessing game as to where the shoals of sardines will appear next and if there will be gamefish driving them. Just before the run and a week or two after it has passed is usually more predictable. This area is very similar in topography to the quickly changing Umkomaas-Hibberdene coastline except that here there are even more bays, coves, small beaches, rocky shores, river mouths and headlands per kilometre and the local deep-water points are legendary. All the popular spots are easily accessible from the main road and all towns and villages have accommodation.

The Mtamvuna Estuary lies immediately south of Port Edward. The mouth area, as far upstream as the Old Pont, is used extensively by skiers and jet skiers and this is not conducive to good fishing. In the upper reaches, inside the Mtamvuna Nature Reserve, where motorised craft are not allowed, fishing for garrick, kingfish, springer, rock salmon, kob, perch and shad is much more productive.



Offshore flyfishing along this coast is very good and most charter boats operate from Shelly Beach. Tuna, albacore and garrick are the prime targets, but when the currents are right, flyrodders have made good catches of dorado and king mackerel.

The whole Natal Coast is exposed to heavy swell action and visiting anglers should approach with caution. If you do not have a local guide study the area you are going to fish thoroughly beforehand. Good rock shoes and a stripping basket are a must when fishing the surf.

The Natal Parks Board enforces the fishing laws. No licences are required for saltwater flyfishing but bag limits and closed seasons, for certain species, do exist and must be scrupulously observed. Inasmuch as these laws are amended from time to time visitors should check with the Parks Board on (0331) 47-1961.



By Grant Atkinson



THE 270-KILOMETRE LONG STRETCH of coastline situated between the Mtamvuna River in the north and the Great Kei River in the south is appropriately known as the Wild Coast (**Figure 21**). A region of varied topography and spectacular scenery, it is still largely undeveloped. The northern half is characterised by steep, grassy hills and valleys with many rocky points and headlands dropping away into the sea whereas the southern half is gentler with long beaches of shimmering silver sand fringed by dunes crowned with coastal forest. Some forty rivers draining the hinterland enter the sea, and this is part of what makes the Wild Coast a virtually endless angling territory for saltwater flyfishermen.

The warm Agulhas Current originating in the tropics, flows southwestward along the Wild Coast and is responsible for the extended range of many species of warm-water gamefish that occur much further south than one would otherwise expect. The actual distance between the Current and the shoreline varies. Along the Wild Coast, the Continental Shelf is at its narrowest in the area around the Mtakatyi River and gradually widens to the south. The narrower the shelf, the closer the Current is to the shore and vice versa. The temperature of inshore water is also influenced by the two prevailing winds. Prolonged periods of southwesterly wind drive warm water right onto the shoreline and up the estuaries whereas strong southeasterly winds result in upwelling that causes inshore waters to become cold and green and unsuitable for fishing. The southwesterly wind occurs most often during autumn and winter whereas the southeasterly is the predominant summer wind.

The climate is warm in summer and mild in winter. Average maximum daily temperatures along the coast are 28°C in January and 21°C in July. Average minimums are 17°C and 8°C respectively. This is a summer rainfall area and heavy rains can cause the rivers to flood and become muddy. A glance at my record book shows that I was unable to flyfish for about six weekends during the 1996/97 summer owing to discoloured water from heavy rains. The water clears quickly though, especially in the smaller estuaries, and they are usually fishable within a week. Most rain usually



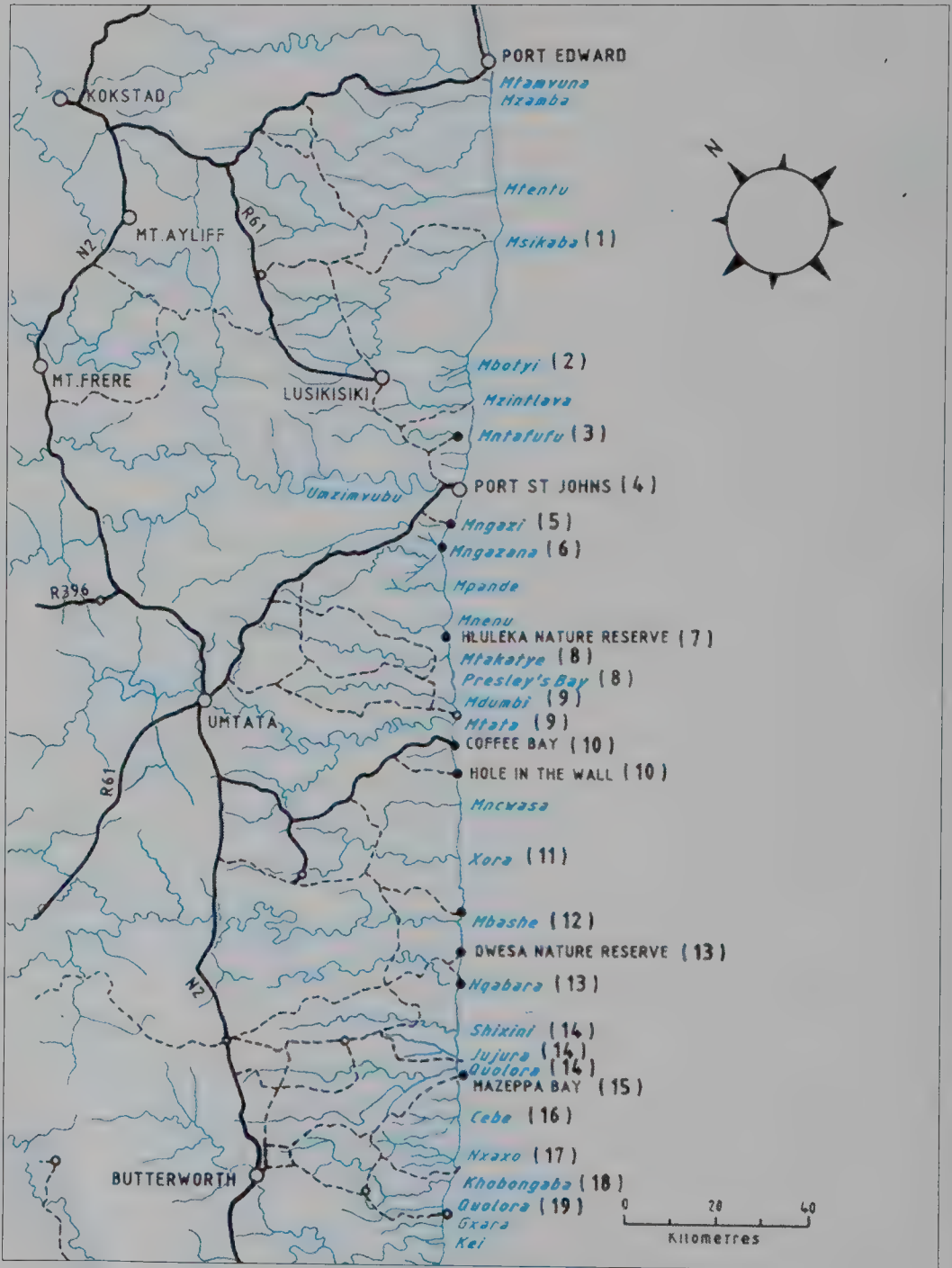


FIGURE 21: SALTWATER FLYFISHING VENUES ALONG THE WILD COAST

falls in the period from November to March. All information concerning climate should serve as a rough guide only and presupposes normal weather conditions. Abnormal major weather patterns such as the El Niño phenomenon may severely disrupt normal conditions.

The Wild Coast is completely exposed to the ocean and when wild weather assails the shores it experiences rough sea and surf conditions. Under such conditions it is possible to cast a fly into the sea at one of the many points, river mouths or headlands but, in reality, these places can only be fished properly when sea conditions are relatively calm. Surf action on rough days is just too powerful to contend with. For this reason not much surf flyfishing is done on the Wild Coast, and although there is great potential for big fish to be caught in this way, local knowledge is even more important than when fishing the estuaries. During windy periods the estuaries usually provide sheltered waters where casting is easier.

The estuaries and lagoons where fresh water and salt water mingle are places of great beauty. Lined by stands of mangrove trees and riverine forest, the upper reaches are commonly guarded by steep cliffs, with flame-flowered aloes sprouting from crevices and clefts in the rocks. The estuarine environments are home to a wealth of bird species, from tiny iridescent kingfishers to the majestic African fish eagle. The largest of these estuaries are tidal for as much as 7 kilometres from the mouth. At the other end of the size scale are the blind lagoons: small rivers that only open to the sea at the highest spring tides or at times of flood. Both types of waters can provide exciting flyfishing. Most of the bigger rivers that are permanently open to the sea are, in many ways, similar in their physical structure (**Figure 22**). They commonly have fairly small, narrow mouths which soon give way to extensive sandbars that are easily fished on foot. Many of the estuaries also have rocks fringing one of the banks at the mouth and in places it is possible to fish on foot from these rocks. The higher reaches of the rivers are usually heavily vegetated and the substrates soft and muddy, necessitating the use of a boat. It is worth remembering that some of the small blind estuaries fish best when their mouths are closed off from the sea. The water depth is much greater than when they are open and some may be too shallow to hold fish at all after heavy rains.

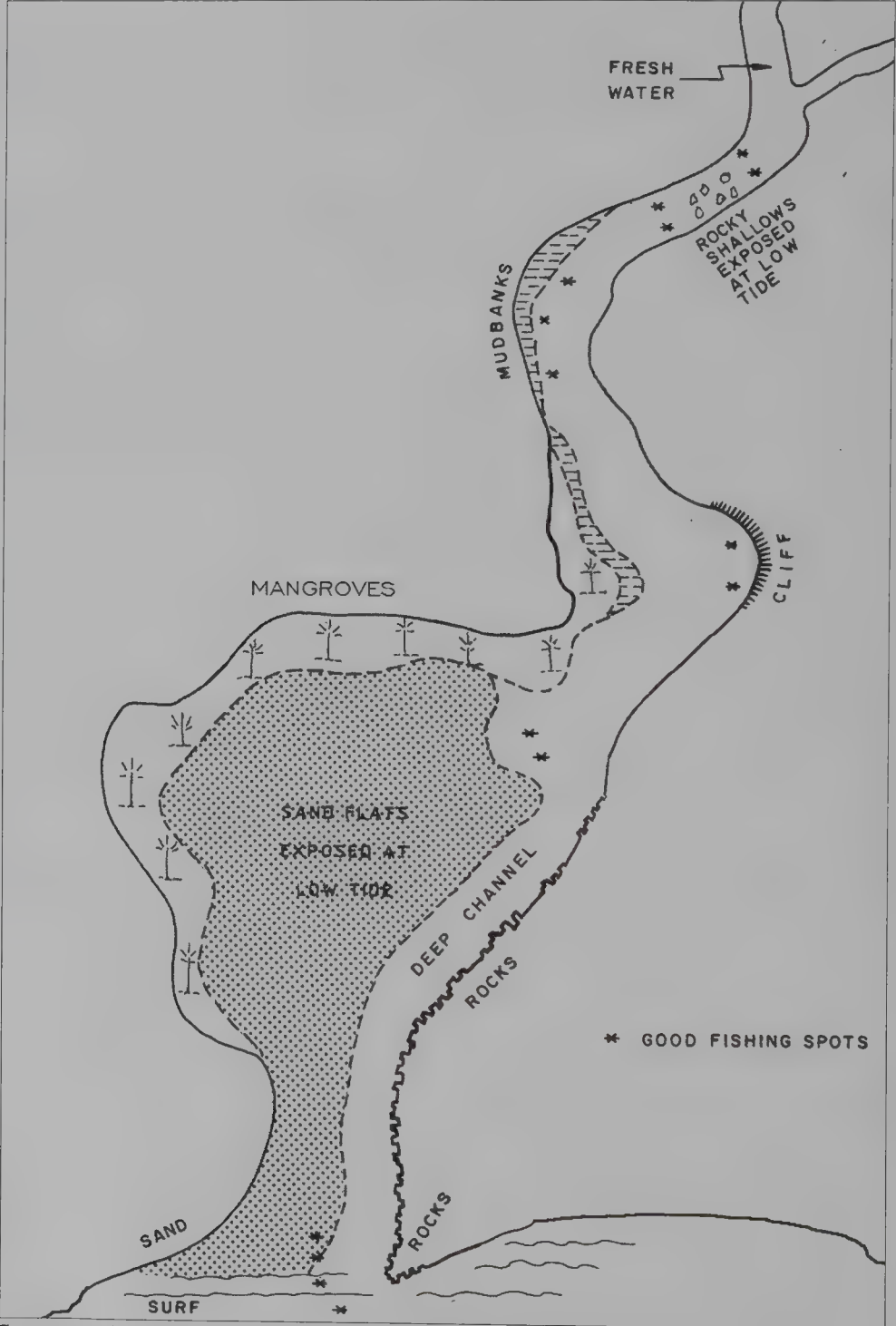


FIGURE 22: IDEALISED DIAGRAM OF A TYPICAL WILD COAST ESTUARY

The best time for flyfishing the Wild Coast is during the warmer months, from October through to May. This is particularly true of the estuaries, and less so of the surf, where it is possible to catch shad and leerfish all year round. In high summer, the sun heats the water in the upper tidal reaches of the estuaries to such an extent that its temperature exceeds that of the water in the sea. When this happens, the angler can expect good catches as feeding fish frequently become concentrated in these warm-water “pockets”. Obviously, the use of a boat makes the task of finding such “pockets” much simpler. Other good flyfishing opportunities exist around the sandbanks that usually form a short distance upriver of the mouth. On a rising tide, when warm seawater is being pushed into the estuary pronounced tidal rips form where the incoming water flows over a shallow sandbar and then suddenly drops off into much deeper water. These “drop-offs” occur in almost all the estuaries along the Wild Coast and the rips often hold hungry gamefish. On low tides and falling tides, predatory gamefish sometimes station themselves in the deep water just upstream of these shallow sandbanks, and then make periodic forays into the shallows to capture the baitfish seeking shelter there. It is also a good idea to fish spots where creeks or channels join the estuary, as these are also known hunting grounds of gamefish. Remember, however, that many of these fish range freely within an estuary. Whereas they tend to favour the typical predator haunts described above, there are times when they just drift with the tide, often just below the water surface. Always remember to be on the lookout for signs of their presence. Protruding tail and dorsal fins, large boils and swirls in the water, or shimmering, rippling water that looks unnatural can all indicate the presence of gamefish.

#### TACKLE

For estuary applications, rods from 7- weight to 9- weight will suffice. In this range they are capable of throwing larger flies and are also able to subdue a strong fish quickly, an important factor when one intends releasing fish. For surf fishing, a 9- or 10- weight rod is appropriate. Reels should be corrosion resistant and have smooth drags. For estuary work it should be able to load at least 100 metres of backing as some of the faster species of gamefish in these waters make long high-speed runs when hooked. For surf fishing the reel becomes even more important. It should hold at least 200 metres of backing and it is absolutely vital that the drag is strong,





smooth and fade-proof. Flylines are more a matter of personal preference. Except for kob, most of the gamefish are best fished for either on or near the surface and the rivers are, for the most part, comparatively shallow. You will seldom fish water deeper than 3 metres so floating and intermediate lines are ideal. To fish deep for species like kob in such water use a weighted fly on an intermediate line to reach bottom. Regardless of whether you use floating or sinking lines, it is essential to use either weight-forward tapers or shooting heads to cope with the wind as well as to provide maximum casting distance. Much of the flyfishing can be classified as blind casting, and the longer casts obtained by the use of these line types will increase the angler's chance of a fish. For fishing the surf, floating or intermediate lines work well in fairly calm shallow spots or for throwing poppers and sliders. Sinking lines of various densities are necessary when seeking subsurface feeders through a whole range of depths, from near the top to deep down. Leader construction is up to the individual. It is essential to use a heavy shock tippet of 13- to 16- kilogram monofilament attached to the fly as several of the local species have rough mouths and quickly wear through lighter tippets. Only two species, the slender barracuda and the shad, have teeth sharp enough to sever heavy monofilament, and for these fish, wire tippets should be used.

Fly patterns which have proven themselves are Lefty's Deceivers, tarpon flies, bucktail streamers, Crazy Charlies, Clouser's Minnows, several squid imitations, balsa or foam poppers, deerhair sliders and Dahlberg Divers. Effective hook sizes range from No 2 for the smaller flies such as Crazy Charlies up to 3/0 for Lefty's Deceivers. The size of the hook is determined by the species sought.

A stripping basket is indispensable when flyfishing from the side, particularly in fast-flowing tidal rivers or in the surf. Polarized glasses, clothing which provides protection from the fierce summer sun, and sunblock cream are other necessary items of equipment.

#### **FLYROD SPECIES OF THE WILD COAST**

Skipjack (*Elops machnata*), also known as springer, are found in virtually every estuary on the Wild Coast. Probably no other saltwater gamefish is so dear to the heart of the flyfisherman. It is an elongate, slender fish with chromium-bright silver scales on its flanks and a dark green back. It is powered by a large forked tail, and has

a deep, wide-opening mouth lined with tiny, rough teeth. The outer cartilage of the jaw is similarly rough, and this sandpaper-like surface will quickly abrade light monofilament shock tippets. Skipjack can be found in any part of an estuary, but most are caught in the middle to upper reaches. They often betray their presence by gliding along just below the surface with the tips of their sharply pointed tail and dorsal fins protruding from the water. When disturbed, they create large surface boils as they dive to the safety of the depths. A very quiet approach works best when stalking these “surface-finning” fish. They attain lengths well in excess of a metre, although the average fish is around 65 centimetres. Skipjack favour warm water and as they are so often found on the surface, floating or intermediate lines are best. The best flies are Dahlberg Divers, tarpon flies, small baitfish imitations, poppers and, occasionally, Crazy Charlies or Clouser’s Minnows in hook sizes 2 to 1/0. Retrieve speeds for skipjack need not be too fast, especially if a surface fly like a Dahlberg is being used. Once hooked, they streak off and any fish over 70 centimetres long will put your tackle to the test. They are capable of palm-scorching finger-cracking runs of as much as 100 metres and jump frequently during the fight. When returning skipjack to the water avoid touching them as much as is possible to prevent infection and injury. The best way is to grip the lower jaw firmly with one hand and then gently support the fish under the anal fin with the other. The most productive months to fish for skipjack are from October to April.

Leerfish (*Lichia amia*), also known as garrick or leervis, are predators that frequent the surf as well as estuaries. They are excellent quarry for the flyrodder and must rate alongside skipjack and kingfish as top Wild Coast glamour species. Leerfish can attain a length of 1,3 metres or more and a mass in excess of 20 kilograms. The skin is smooth and silvery on the sides and grey-green on the back. The large mouth is armed with rows of small, fine viliform teeth. The prominent dorsal and anal fins, large, dark forked tail and bold, wavy lateral line easily identify it. During the warmer months, from October to May, shoals of migrating leerfish enter those Wild Coast estuaries that are open to the sea. The duration of their stay is variable. Some depart soon whereas others remain through summer into autumn but sometime around May they start heading north to warmer waters. Fish too young to undertake the migration remain in the rivers during the winter months. They seldom exceed 35



centimetres in length. The northern half of the Wild Coast experiences a longer run of leeries than further south. In the Port St. Johns area they can be caught in the surf virtually year round with many large fish being landed during late winter and spring. April and May are the peak months in the southern half of the Wild Coast. The best fishing for leerfish usually commences when water temperatures exceed 16 °C. As they are predominantly surface feeders, poppers, deerhair sliders, Dahlberg Divers and Lefty's Deceivers in sizes 1 to 3/0 work best, especially on floating lines. Shock tippets of 10- to 13- kilogram monofilament will prevent the leerfish's fine teeth from fraying the leader. In estuaries leeries strike more readily when the surface is disturbed and are easier to catch in choppy tidal rips or wind-rippled water than in glassy calm flat. When a leerfish follows a fly or popper, it creates a huge, unmistakable bulge in the water surface, often continuing in this manner for several metres before striking. The wave created ahead of the fish's mouth may push very buoyant flies such as balsa poppers aside and make hooking up difficult. Deerhair sliders alleviate this problem. Leerfish are very strong, long-running fighters and are one of the most exciting and challenging species to pursue with the flyrod.

Kob (*Argyrosomus japonicus*), or kabeljou, as they are also known, are fish of estuarine, inshore, surf and offshore waters. Smaller kob are found in estuaries throughout the year, whereas larger fish enter estuaries and river mouths at various times, particularly during winter and spring when their spawning migration begins. Kob are tolerant of a wide range of conditions including discoloured water and fairly cold water temperatures. They are actively predatory both during the day and night. Kob may reach a length of up to 2 metres and a mass of around 80 kilograms. They are aggressive fish with large mouths armed with sharp, pointed teeth. The flanks are

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
SPRINGER / SKIPJACK	ELOPS MACHNATA												
LEERFISH / GARRICK	LICHIA AMIA												
ELF / SHAD	POMATOMUS SALTATRIX												
KOB / KABELJOU	ARGYROSOMUS JAPONICUS												

TABLE 2: RELATIVE SEASONAL ABUNDANCE OF CERTAIN WILD COAST SPECIES

silvery, overlain by a beautiful purple iridescence and a line of silver dots. The tail is wide and rounded. Most kob are caught in midwater or near the bottom so, in deeper water, sinking lines and weighted flies are necessary. In shallow estuaries, a weighted fly fished slowly on an intermediate line will work. Lefty's Deceivers, Whistlers, tarpon flies, streamers, Crazy Charlies and Clouser's Minnows in sizes from No 1 to 3/0 will all catch kob. Kob occasionally show preference for dark-coloured flies, particularly in low-light conditions. In estuaries, look for them in deeper holes, near drop-offs, over rocky banks and near creek mouths. River mouths and deep channels or holes on sandy beaches are also favoured kob hunting grounds. They are dogged fighters, if not speedy, but large fish are difficult to subdue, especially those hooked in river mouths and in the surf, so heavier tackle is necessary for flyfishing these areas. In estuaries, 8- and 9- weight outfits are capable of handling most fish.

Elf (*Pomatomus saltatrix*), also known as shad, are widely distributed and occur in nearly all the warm seas of the world. They are fish of the surf and inshore waters rather than estuaries. Along the Wild Coast they can be caught year round but by far the most fish are taken during the winter months when large shoals migrate from the cool waters of the Cape to the KwaZulu-Natal shores. River mouths, harbour walls, rocky points and headlands are all good fishing spots for elf. At times during their migration, shoals are also found offshore and they can then be caught from boats. When feeding, they will attack virtually any fly thrown at them. Poppers or streamers are equally effective, although it pays to use sparse, easily tied flies as elf are equipped with very sharp teeth and will quickly decimate the contents of your fly box. Wire tippets are essential. As they are often caught on or near the surface in shallow surf, floating or intermediate lines are adequate. In deeper, calmer water it may be necessary to use sinking lines and weighted flies to reach the fish. Although fewer elf are taken in estuaries than elsewhere, they do frequent rivers open to the sea throughout the year. Look for them around tidal rips and deepwater drop-offs where shoals of small mullet or other baitfish gather. The same flies that work in the surf are also effective in estuaries. Elf are strong, determined fighters on fly tackle and although most fish caught will be between 30 and 40 centimetres long, they can attain lengths of up to a metre. Care should be exercised when handling a live elf as their sharp teeth can inflict severe wounds very easily.





Both the giant kingfish (*Caranx ignobilis*) and the bigeye (*C. sexfasciatus*) occur along the Wild Coast although the further north the more abundant they become. In estuaries they tend to hunt and feed in much the same manner as skipjack, and similar tackle and techniques can be employed for catching them. They rarely exceed lengths of 60 centimetres in these waters. Off the northern Wild Coast much larger specimens are landed occasionally. Whatever their size, they are acknowledged to be most determined and aggressive fighters combining speed with incredible power.

The species following are caught less frequently on fly along the Wild Coast. River snappers (*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*) and riverbream (*Acanthopagrus berda*) occur year round in virtually all estuaries, whether they are blind or open to the sea. Both species are territorial and favour structure, particularly reefs and rocks, submerged logs, undercut banks and around creek mouths. River snappers are reddish, fairly heavily built, square tailed and armed with large dog-like teeth. Although they are resident in the rivers, they prefer warm water and are most abundant in summer. The upper reaches of many estuaries provide ideal habitat for snappers, but they are also found near the river mouths. They feed most actively in the low-light conditions of dusk and dawn. Large Deceivers, deerhair sliders, large tarpon flies, poppers and Dahlberg Divers are good flies to use. It is usually necessary to cast the fly right into the structure to prompt a strike that is invariably ferocious and violent and followed by a fast, powerful run back towards the structure. If the fish is not held it will cut the line in seconds, so heavy monofilament leaders and tippetts are necessary. Snappers can attain lengths of around 90 centimetres and a mass of up to 10 kilograms. The average size is approximately 50 centimetres. Riverbream are small dark silver-grey fish with yellow anal fins. The tail is broad and slightly forked. They have small mouths with strong sharp teeth for crushing the prawns and crabs they prey upon. They seldom exceed 70 centimetres in length and are mostly in the 20- to 40-centimetre range. Bream are dogged fighters but without the power or ferocity of snappers. They can be caught on smaller flies, also fished in toward cover or structure. Small poppers twitched very slowly are particularly effective.

Spotted grunter (*Pomadasys commersonnii*) are common estuary fish. They like feeding on prawns, which they blow from their holes in sand and mudbanks. When feeding in this near vertical manner in the shallows, with heads rooting in the bottom

and tails waving above the surface they are said to be “tailing”. Grunter are silver, burnished with purple, and have black spots along their sides. They are caught fairly consistently on fly in estuaries in the Port Elizabeth area but along the Wild Coast the success rate has been low. Whether this is a result of a lack of properly directed effort or not is still undecided but the fish are there and, not too far away, they do eat flies so perhaps the opportunity exists for some pioneering work by an enthusiastic flyfisherman. Effective fly patterns include small Crazy Charlies, Clouser’s Minnows and prawn imitations. Grunter are very powerful hard-fighting fish and are, therefore, well worth pursuing with the flyrod.

Slender or pickhandle barracuda (*Sphyræna jello*) are, as their name suggests, slim, silvery members of the barracuda family, with dark vertical bars on the back and partly down the sides. Their large mouths are armed with fearsome teeth and it is best to use a wire tippet ahead of the fly when targeting these fish. Like kingfish, slender barracuda are more plentiful in the north.

There are many other fish species along this coast including popular angling fishes such as blacktail, bronze bream and white steenbras, to name a few. Except for white steenbras these fish prefer rocky gullies where the water is well churned and running strongly and getting a fly to them in such rough conditions is well - nigh impossible. Perhaps there are a few places along the coast where this is possible, but it will require intimate local knowledge of the particular area.

#### RECOMMENDED VENUES AND ACCESS

The N2 national road follows an inland route more or less parallel to the coast all the way from the northeast to the southwest. All of it is tarred and in reasonable condition. From the N2 a score or more of roads, almost invariably gravel, head in a southeasterly direction towards the coast. The road from Umtata to Port St Johns is tarred and in good condition, as is the road to Coffee Bay from Viedgesville on the N2 south of Umtata. The Butterworth – Kentani road is presently being resurfaced. Unless otherwise stated in the text, treat all other roads as gravel. For most venues, four-wheel drive vehicles are not normally required. Remember that the condition of the gravel roads varies considerably and at times, they can be in very poor repair. It is essential, therefore, to confirm their state before a trip. Although several of the venues described have no accommodation available for overnight visits, it is still



possible and worthwhile to try and fish them, even if one stays at the nearest hotel and makes day trips. A lightweight canoe or paddle ski is often essential to success in some rivers, enabling the angler to reach banks and pools in the higher reaches. The lighter the craft, the better, as launch sites are usually non-existent and the boat will have to be carried to the water.

#### **MSIKABA RIVER (1)**

This river, which, it is claimed, is the deepest in South Africa, is neither exceptionally wide nor long. It forms the southern boundary of the provincial Mkambati Nature Reserve that extends northeastward as far as the relatively pristine Mtentu River. The Reserve is accessible via a gravel road branching off the R61 at Flagstaff between Kokstad and Lusikisiki. It is a popular holiday area and a steady producer of fish. Fishing is not permitted from boats within the Marine Reserve, which extends seaward and includes the two rivers. Mkambati is home to many game animals and bird species and access to the river is via a short beach walk. Visitors have a wide choice of accommodation which includes two lodges with 10 and 20 beds respectively, six 6-bedded chalets, a 6-bedded cottage and eight 2-bedded rondavels. All accommodation is self-catering. A provincial campsite is situated across the river from Mkambati. For information on Msikaba and Mkambati phone Eastern Cape Nature Conservation (Kokstad) on (037) 727-3273. Mkambati reservations are handled by Keval Travel on (037) 727-3124 whereas campsites are booked through ECNC (Umtata) on (047) 31-2711.

#### **MBOTYI RIVER (2)**

The hotel at Mbotyi has closed down but the owners of the Mntafufu operation are reported to be in the process of refurbishing what will be a self-catering cottage close to the mouth of the small Mbotyi estuary. The lagoon that is closed to the sea much of the time is known to turn up some good flyfishing for the common Wild Coast species.

#### **MNTAFUFU RIVER (3)**

The Mntafufu River is approximately 11 kilometres northeast of Port St. Johns. John Costello reports that two new operations have opened recently on the Mntafufu – Wild Coast Inn and Ezulweni Camp. To reach the first, travellers from the north turn left off the R61 about 24 kilometres south of Lusikisiki and follow the dirt road

to the resort, which is situated on a hill, about 1 kilometre from the river and approximately 4 kilometres from the mouth. The river is open to the sea and provides good fishing opportunities around the mouth as well as further upriver. The only way to reach the mouth from the launch site is by boat. Boats and canoes can be hired but outboard motors are not yet available. The owner can provide a ferry service down the river for day trips if required. The unspoiled Mzintlava River is only 7 kilometres to the northeast but to drive there takes roughly one and a half-hours. Day trips from Mntafufu to the Mzintlava, or to any of the scenic attractions in the area, with transport provided, can be arranged.

Wild Coast Inn can accommodate 34 guests in eight self-catering cottages. For full details contact the owners, Alan and Lena Hein, on (082) 967-1433. Repeated attempts over many weeks to contact Roger Redman, the owner of the other establishment, were unsuccessful.

#### **MZIMVUBU RIVER (4)**

Port St. Johns is a well-known small town on the Mzimvubu River where it spills into the sea. It is a leading angling centre, famous for its big kob, leerfish and grunter. The river drains a huge area so when it becomes dirty during the summer, which is fairly often, it does not clear quickly. Fortunately several species of migratory gamefish peak during the autumn to spring period thereby ensuring continuous action. Moreover there are several other very good estuaries and surf-fishing spots nearby that can be fished when the Mzimkulu is running dirty. John Costello, long-time resident and well-known local flyfisherman, says that Port St. Johns is trying to get itself back on the map judging by the number of establishments offering accommodation that have opened recently. Give John a call on (0475) 44-1121 for firsthand information on fishing conditions in the area.

For accommodation try the following: Dolphins Rest, Tel. (045) 333-1335, Outspan Inn Bed and Breakfast, Tel. (0475) 44-1057 or 44-1345; The Jetty, Tel. (0475) 44-1072, or The Pont Boating (0475) 44-1324.

#### **MNGAZI RIVER (5)**

Umngazi River Bungalows is situated on the banks of this river and is reached from Umtata via a road that is tarred for most of the way. It is also only a short distance from Port St. Johns. The Mngazi is a highly rated estuary and many of the Wild Coast





gamefish species are found here. It can be fished from the side or from a boat. The resort has been refurbished recently and makes an effort to cater for the specific needs of saltwater flyfishermen. Guides and boats are available. For reservations and information phone (0475) 44-1115/6/8/9; (031) 72 5200 or (031) 701-6881.

#### **MNGAZANA RIVER (6)**

This small estuary is 4 kilometres southwest of the Mngazi and is also considered to be an excellent fishery for all the local gamesters. There are no facilities so day trips originating from one of the nearby resorts appear to be the answer.

#### **HLULEKA NATURE RESERVE (7)**

The Mnenu River lies within the reserve but access is difficult, even with a four-wheel drive vehicle. Accommodation in the reserve is in wooden bungalows. For reservations and advice contact the Eastern Cape Nature Conservation (Umtata) at (0471) 31-2711/2/3.

#### **MTAKATYE RIVER, PRESLEY'S BAY AND LWANDILE (8)**

Aside from private cottages or shacks, no accommodation is available at any of these spots but they can be reached by road from Umtata Mouth. The Lwandile lagoon is small and can be fished without a boat. At Presley's Bay, which is sheltered and often easily fishable with fly, small kingfish, shad and spotted pompano have been landed in the surf. The Mtakatye River, a few kilometres north by four-wheel drive vehicle, is one of the larger estuaries on the coast. Flyfishing is good in and around the mouth as well as higher up in the river. A boat is needed.

#### **UMTATA MOUTH (9)**

The Anchorage Hotel lies close to the mouth of the Mtata River, which is well known for good fishing. The river often runs dirty for long periods during times of heavy rains. The Mdumbi River and Tshani Point, a short distance north, are visited by fishermen based at Umtata Mouth as no accommodation is available. For information and reservations phone the Anchorage Hotel at (0471) 34-0061.

#### **COFFEE BAY AND HOLE IN THE WALL (10)**

Both venues are noted for their superb natural scenery and breathtaking coastal views. A variety of accommodation is available. The tarred road to Coffee Bay turns off the N2 at Viedgesville and goes directly to the hotel. To reach Hole in the Wall, follow the Coffee Bay road for about 51 kilometres and turn right onto a gravel road.

The turn is clearly marked and it is approximately 14 kilometres to the resort. Aside from the small Mpako River at Hole in the Wall, and the area around its mouth, there are not too many recognised flyfishing spots nearby. Contact Ocean View Hotel at (0475) 44-2005/6 (o/h) or (0471) 23938 (a/h); alternatively try Coffee Bay Backpackers at (0475) 44-2004.

**XORA RIVER (11)**

No accommodation is available at Xora but the tidal estuary that extends upstream for several kilometres is well worth visiting, even if only for a day. The mouth area can be fished from the bank, but as with almost all the larger estuaries on this coast, you must have a boat to venture further upriver. The smaller Bulungula River, a few kilometres north of Xora, can only be reached with a four-wheel drive vehicle.

**MBASHE RIVER (12)**

The Haven Hotel is just a short drive north of the Mbashe River, within the Cwebe Nature Reserve. It provides an ideal base for fishing this area. The Mbashe is well known for its annual runs of large kob and grunter but during the rainy season it can become unfishable for long periods. The small Mbanyane River estuary, a few kilometres north of The Haven but still within the reserve, fishes well in summer. Access can be difficult, and one should check the condition of the road before proceeding. Still further north the Nthlonyane River forms the northern boundary of the Cwebe Nature Reserve. The same cautionary advice regarding the road to this estuary applies as to the Mbanyane River.

For reservations and information phone The Haven at (0474) 62-0247 or (0471) 31-1425.

**DWESA NATURE RESERVE (13)**

Wooden cabins within a forest nature reserve provide self-catering accommodation for visitors to Dwesa. No fishing is allowed on the Mendu and Mendwana Rivers within the reserve, but it is feasible to fish the Nqabara River, which is a twenty-minute drive south of Dwesa. The area around the mouth of the Nqabara can be fished on foot but a boat is needed to travel upriver. A four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended for launching and retrieving a boat here. The Nqabara is navigable for about 7 kilometres from the mouth and provides excellent fishing at



times. Spectacular cliffs tower above deep pools in the upper reaches of this river, whereas at the mouth, the small Nqabarana River joins the Nqabara to provide still more fishing opportunities.

For booking advice contact ECNC (East London) at (0431) 42-0360.

#### **QORA RIVER (14)**

The Kob Inn Hotel is situated close to the mouth of the Qora River, which is a tidal river of some size. Aside from the lower reaches and the mouth area, a boat is essential to fish this river. Small boats are available from the hotel but it is best to confirm this beforehand. The small Jujura River estuary is a short drive north of the hotel and can be fished from the banks. Still further north is the Shixini River, which is only accessible by four-wheel drive vehicle. It is permanently open to the sea and is best fished from a boat. There is a grass landing strip close to the hotel.

For information and reservations phone Kob Inn Hotel at (0474) 62-0246 or (0474) 99-0011.

#### **MAZEPPA BAY (15)**

Accommodation is available at the Mazeppa Bay Hotel. A blind lagoon known as First River lies within walking distance south of the hotel. It is fairly shallow but can provide reasonable fly-fishing when full. Further south is the Ngqwara River, which is accessible by four-wheel drive vehicles. It is larger than First River and periodically opens to the sea. The Island, a famous heavy tackle fishing spot, lies directly in front of the hotel. On calm days it is possible to throw a fly here for shad and leerfish. The hotel has a landing strip for small aircraft.

Phone Mazeppa Bay Hotel on (0474) 4771 or (047) 498-0033 for full details.

#### **CEBE NATURE RESERVE (16)**

A fenced campsite with ablution facilities sits on a hillside overlooking the small Cebe River, which only opens to the sea in times of high rainfall. A small boat is useful to get around the river. For booking advice phone ECNC (East London) at (0431) 42-0360.

#### **NXAXO RIVER (WAVECREST) (17)**

Wavecrest Hotel is situated at the confluence and mouth of the Nxaxo and Nqusi Rivers. Small boats are available but it is best to arrange for their use before arrival. It is advisable to bring one's own outboard motor to use on these boats. The

hotel has stunning views of both rivers, and the management strongly encourages a catch-and-release ethic amongst its guests. Both rivers have sandy drop-offs that can be fished on foot but a boat is needed to fish the highest reaches. In calm conditions it is possible to fish the river mouth from either the northern beach side or the rocky south bank. A concrete slipway allows easy launching of boats and it is possible to moor boats safely in the river for the duration of one's visit, making early morning fishing trips much easier. When conditions are ideal, the river mouth can provide exciting flyfishing for leerfish. Fly-in holidays can be arranged as the resort has its own grass landing strip only a few hundred metres from the hotel.

Phone Wavecrest Hotel at (0474) 32272 or (047) 498 0022 for full details.

**KOBONQABA RIVER (18)**

No accommodation is available at Kobonqaba other than private cottages. A designated campsite on the north bank of the river mouth has no facilities or ablutions and it is a better idea to stay at Wavecrest Hotel and then operate from there as it is only a ten minute drive away. Without a four-wheel drive vehicle it is almost impossible to launch a boat in this river. On calm days it is possible to fish both sides of the mouth for kob and leerfish. The sandbank drop-off can be easily seen and reached on foot from the mouth. The higher reaches can only be fished from a boat.

**QOLORA (19)**

Two hotels are sited at Qolora, the Trennerys Hotel, which is but a short walk from the mouth of the Qolora River, and the Seagulls Hotel, which is situated a little further south, almost on the beach. The Qolora River has a small estuary and is only tidal during periods of high rainfall. The lower reaches can be fished on foot. The Gxara River lies just a kilometre or two south of the Qolora. Similar in size and nature to the Qolora, the Gxara can provide good fishing. Both hotels make use of a nearby grass airstrip.

For information and reservations phone Trennerys Hotel at (0474) 4102/3293 or (047) 498-0011 or Seagulls Hotel at (0474) 3287.

**FACILITIES AND INFORMATION**

For reservations and information about hiking trails, camping sites and nature reserves contact Eastern Cape Nature Conservation (Umtata) on (0471) 31-2711/2/3.



Other tourism contact numbers:

Wild Coast Tourism Board : (0471) 31-2885/6

Wild Coast Central Reservations Office : (0471) 25-344

Both Alcock's Fishing Tackle in Port Elizabeth, Tel. (041) 56- 0202, and Target Line in East London, Tel. (0431) 54496, can supply visiting anglers with all their tackle requirements as well as with up to date information concerning tides, locations and current fishing conditions.

## *Port St Johns Wild Coast.*



- ★ Serviced, self-catering cottage on the beach
- ★ Situated at Aggate Terrace across the Umzimvubu River.
- ★ Flyfishing in the Mzimvubu, Mngazi, Mgazana and Mntafufu Rivers.
- ★ Rock and surf fishing included.

Contact Peter and Pam Baum

Tel / FAX 045 - 333 1335 / 7

PO Box 179 UGIE 5470

By Bricky Branfield



THE STRETCH OF COUNTRY BETWEEN THE KEI RIVER in the northeast and the Bushman's River in the southwest is popularly known as the Sunshine Coast (**Figure 23**). All the rivers southwest of East London are easily accessible from the R72 to Port Elizabeth and the turn-offs are clearly signposted. Specific instructions are given on how to reach those to the northeast of the city. The best fishing months are those containing an "R" in the spelling with the peak period being from November through February. The mouths of most of the rivers in the area are narrow and consequently the currents are very strong on ebb or flood tides. The best fishing is normally where the neck of the river widens into a deeper drop-off channel, usually about 200 to 500 metres upstream of the mouth. The fish species commonly sought by the flyrodder are the same as those occurring along the southern sector of the Wild Coast and the tackle required is identical. The productive flies tend to imitate either realistically or suggestively, prey such as mullet, sprats, crabs, shrimp, mud-prawns and sand-prawns. Clouser's Minnows, Lefty's Deceivers, Crazy Charlies, small shrimp or prawn imitations and tarpon flies in standard or variant patterns represent a typical selection for this section of coast. Certain colours or combinations of colours such as white with chartreuse, red, blue, yellow or pink are as effective here as they are elsewhere in the world. At certain times, coinciding with the appearance of vast numbers of catfish fry in the rivers, black flies become the hottest producers.

The ocean picture and pattern along this stretch of coast are much the same as off the southern part of the Wild Coast. The seasonal abundance of various fish species also coincides broadly. Nonetheless, the duration of seasons and the runs of fish fluctuate from year to year and there are many inconsistencies in weather and climatic patterns. I would, therefore, be foolish to try and predict too far ahead of time that a specific fish can be caught at a specific place during a specific time period. In the short term your best bet is to phone a reliable local contact or make use of the services of an experienced guide. It surely is possible for the unguided visiting angler

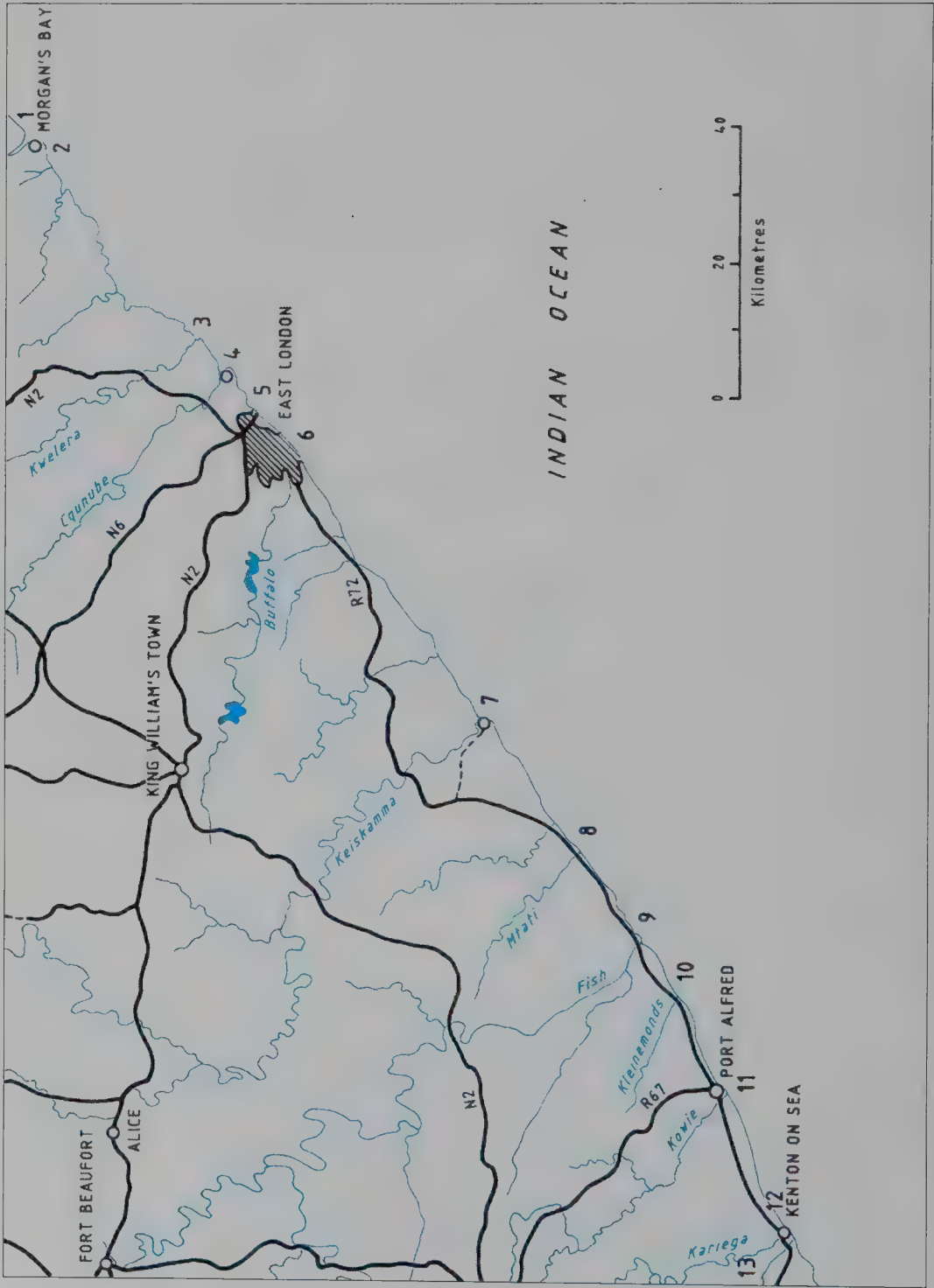


FIGURE 23: SALTWATER FLYFISHING VENUES FROM THE KEI RIVER TO THE BUSHMAN'S RIVER

to drum up flyrod action even though it won't be as easy as with a conscientious and competent guide, who keeps up to date with the currently productive spots.

**KEI RIVER (1)**

This river is larger than most along the Wild Coast but whether the name Great Kei River, as it is commonly known, is justified is a matter of relativity. The village of Kei Mouth is situated at (you guessed it) its mouth. To reach this and the following venue take the Kei Mouth turn-off on the N2 from East London to Umtata. The Kei is often discoloured and dirty and not ideal for flyfishing but bait and lure fishermen score well on shoal kob, which range from 2 to 5 kilograms in weight. As a rule, the best time to throw a fly is at spring tide when clear seawater pushes far up the river. If, at this time, kob are around, try fishing for them at night with a fly that pushes a lot of water such as a heavily dressed Lefty's Deceiver. The left bank offers the best prospects when fishing either the river mouth or the surf. Anglers can cross to the left bank by boat or on the ferry. The ferry also carries vehicles across the river, from where day trips can be made to nearby Qolora on the Wild Coast. Accommodation is available at the Kei Mouth Beach Hotel, Tel. (043) 841-1017, or the Kei Sands Resort, Tel. (043) 841-1011.

**MORGAN'S BAY AND DOUBLE MOUTH (2)**

This village on the coast is just south of Kei Mouth. The small lagoon at Morgan's Bay is easily fished with a flyrod. Boats are available from the caravan park on the banks of the river. The Double Mouth Nature Reserve lies a short drive south of Morgan's Bay. The road to it is well signposted. There is good fishing from the right bank of the small estuary when the mouth is open to the sea. The currents run strongly at the mouth so take care when crossing it and rather use a tube or small canoe. Larger boats are extremely difficult to launch owing to the steep slope down to the water. A small caravan park, campsites and ablution facilities are provided. For full details and reservations phone Morgan's Bay Hotel & Camping on (043) 841-1062.

**KWELERA RIVER (3)**

This must rate as one of the most scenic and productive rivers in the Eastern Cape. Take the East Coast Resorts turn-off on the N2 to Umtata and follow the signposts. A boat is recommended to cover the river most effectively. As usual the





deep hole or dropoff above the sandbank near the mouth is a prime spot whereas the upper reaches of the river perform well during the latter stages of the flood tide and the start of ebb. Boats can be launched off the right bank, near the mouth, or through the Yellowsands Caravan Park. Contact Peter Lappan at the park for permission to do so. As he is also a flyfisherman he will be able to direct you to the current hotspots. His number is (0431) 38-3043.

#### **CQUNUBE RIVER (4)**

This attractive river enters the sea at Gonubie, immediately northeast of East London. Use the same turn-off on the N2 as for the Kwelera. The river yields good catches to the flycaster, particularly at the drop-off near the mouth. When sea temperatures drop below 18° C, knowledgeable Cqunube anglers seek their quarry in the upper reaches of the river. A boat is indispensable, as the drop-off mentioned above is the only area really suitable for wading. If you intend using a boat on the river, be sure to check out and note the positions of the many rocky ledges and sandbars when they are exposed at low tide. The alternative is to use a guide who knows where these hidden danger spots are located in the river. Boats may be launched at Tidewaters. It is clearly signposted.

#### **NAHOON RIVER (5)**

Two major rivers enter the sea within the city limits of East London. The Nahoon bisects the northern part of the city and, because it is so easily accessible, is probably the most popular river along this section of coastline. The rock ledges along the banks draw many shorebound anglers and two islands in the upriver section allow flyrodders to wade safely with no boat needed. For boat anglers launching facilities are available at the municipal slipway at Playwaters. For details about currently productive spots contact a local tackle shop or guide.

#### **BUFFALO RIVER (6)**

This is the second of the two East London rivers. It is in the southern part of the city and incorporates the harbour area. The most favoured and accessible fishing spots are the Long Pier and the Oil Terminal Pier. All the normal species can be caught in the Buffalo River but the highlight of the year occurs when migratory yellowtail reach the piers in early November to kick off a frantic period of prolonged activities lasting until mid-February. Although these yellowtail attain a mass of 20

kilograms, flyfishermen have not been able to land any exceeding 6 kilograms with a success ratio of about one landed for every fifteen hooked. Fishing in the upriver section of the Buffalo is fair but a boat is necessary. Boats may not proceed beyond the Old Bridge.

**KEISKAMMA RIVER (7)**

Take the turn-off to Hamburg on the R72 between East London and Port Elizabeth and follow it for about 15 kilometres to the village which hugs the right bank of the Keiskamma River just short of its outlet to the sea. The estuary is very easy to reach and worthy of attention. Good catches of kob and leerfish are landed in the mouth and further back, big grunter roam the shallow banks, flushing out prawns and driving flyfishermen to distraction by disregarding their most cunningly presented flies. Having a boat is a great advantage.

Accommodation is available at the Hamburg Hotel.

**MTATI RIVER (8)**

The R72 crosses the Mtati less than a kilometre from the mouth. This is one of the classic small rivers. Good catches of kob, leerfish and grunter are made during the summer months and ever so often a skipjack will attack the fly. Boats can be launched at the mouth but there is no accommodation.

**FISH RIVER (9)**

The bridge over the Fish River on the R72 is about 2 kilometres from the mouth, which is easily reached by following the dirt road along the right bank. The Fish is one of those almost perpetually dirty rivers and about the only time it is fishable with a fly is during spring tides. When conditions are favourable expect to find leerfish, kob and grunter.

Accommodation is available at the Fish River Sun or one can use the campsite on the banks of the river.

**THE KLEINEMONDS AND THE RIET RIVERS (10)**

From east to west, the R72 crosses in succession the Kleinemond East, the Kleinemond West and the Riet Rivers. All are blind for the greater part of the year but nonetheless can provide good fishing for leerfish, kob and mullet. No accommodation or camping is available at any of these venues.



### **KOWIE RIVER (11)**

The Kowie River at Port Alfred is tidal and navigable for a considerable distance upstream from its mouth. Fishing from a boat, therefore, gives the angler a far greater choice of options. The favourite targets of flyfishermen on the Kowie are leerfish, kob, elf, skipjack and grunter. Port Alfred has plenty of accommodation of all types and it is also an excellent base from which to fish the four rivers mentioned previously.

### **KARIEGA RIVER (12)**

The picturesque Kariega River has its outlet to the sea on the northeastern side of the village of Kenton on Sea. It is perhaps one of the clearest rivers in the Eastern Cape and is navigable for 14 kilometres from the mouth. Boat fishing is excellent and the best choice on the Kariega. The sandbars at the mouth and at the bridge over the R72 highway are always favoured spots whereas the stretch at the top of the tidal section fishes particularly well from January to March. Boats can be launched at the Kenton on Sea slipway.

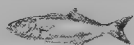
### **BUSHMAN'S RIVER (13)**

The mouths of the Bushman's and Kariega Rivers are only 2 kilometres apart. The Bushman's separates Kenton on Sea from the village of Boesmansriviermond on the right bank. This beautiful river is navigable for more than 30 kilometres and, once again, having the use of a boat is an advantage. Fish species in the Bushman's and Kariega are the same as in the Kowie. Flyfishing is most productive on the prawn banks within the first 3 kilometres of the mouth. The sandbar in the vicinity of the floating restaurant is an excellent night fishing spot for kob.

The two villages offer ample and varied accommodation.

### **FACILITIES AND INFORMATION**

East London is a major holiday centre and offers a large variety of accommodation to suit all tastes. Even the most distant of the many venues mentioned above is not more than an hour and a half by car for those who wish to make East London their base of operations. Flyfishing equipment and information on current fishing conditions are available from Target Line, Tel. (0431) 54496. To find out more about specific spots in rivers and the times to fish them and for information on guiding facilities phone one of the following persons: Bricky Branfield, (0431) 40-4420; Bevan Gardner, (0431) 81253; Barry Loppnow, (0431) 40-5959; or Brett Wiggill, (0431) 54271.



By Dave Alcock



**T**HIS PARTICULAR SECTION OF THE EASTERN CAPE coastline (Figure 24) offers the flyrodder exceptional fishing in places. Although ample opportunities exist for fishing the surf or from boats offshore, most flyfishing is done in estuaries. Flyfishing tackle for local rivers is similar to that used on the Wild Coast. The most productive fly patterns are Deceivers, Mud Charlies, Gotchas, Clouser's Minnows and poppers usually tied on size 2 stainless hooks. If you have an ambition for larger fish, then increase the size of your flies and poppers. Many of our species are available throughout the year. However, should you be planning a trip to any of our local rivers to coincide with the peak fishing times, let it be during the summer months. The only exception is if you are after very large kob – they are more abundant during July, August and September. Table 3, overleaf, shows the relative abundance of the various species during the course of the year.

An angling licence is required for all Eastern Cape rivers and estuaries. It is obtainable from local Receivers of Revenue and *not* from tackle shops. All boats must be registered, either at Algoa Regional Services in Port Elizabeth, or at the localities mentioned under the various venues.

### **SUNDAYS RIVER (1)**

The Sundays River is situated 35 kilometres northeast of Port Elizabeth. It is tidal and navigable for many kilometres. To reach the river, follow the N2 from Port Elizabeth to Grahamstown. After crossing the bridge over the Sundays you enter the small village of Colchester. It is a difficult river to fish without a boat as access to the water is hampered by the high riverbanks and by houses on the banks. The flyfisherman without a boat should concentrate his efforts toward the mouth, which can be reached through Pearson Park resort. Boat anglers can fish anywhere from the mouth to way above the bridge. There are three slipways on the river and a launching fee is payable at each. Boat licences can be purchased at Pearson Park resort.

The Sundays is a renowned Eastern Cape river and anglers using artificial lures and bait catch huge kob during the winter months. Compared to the Swartkops River closer to Port Elizabeth, flyfishing in the Sundays is still in its infancy.



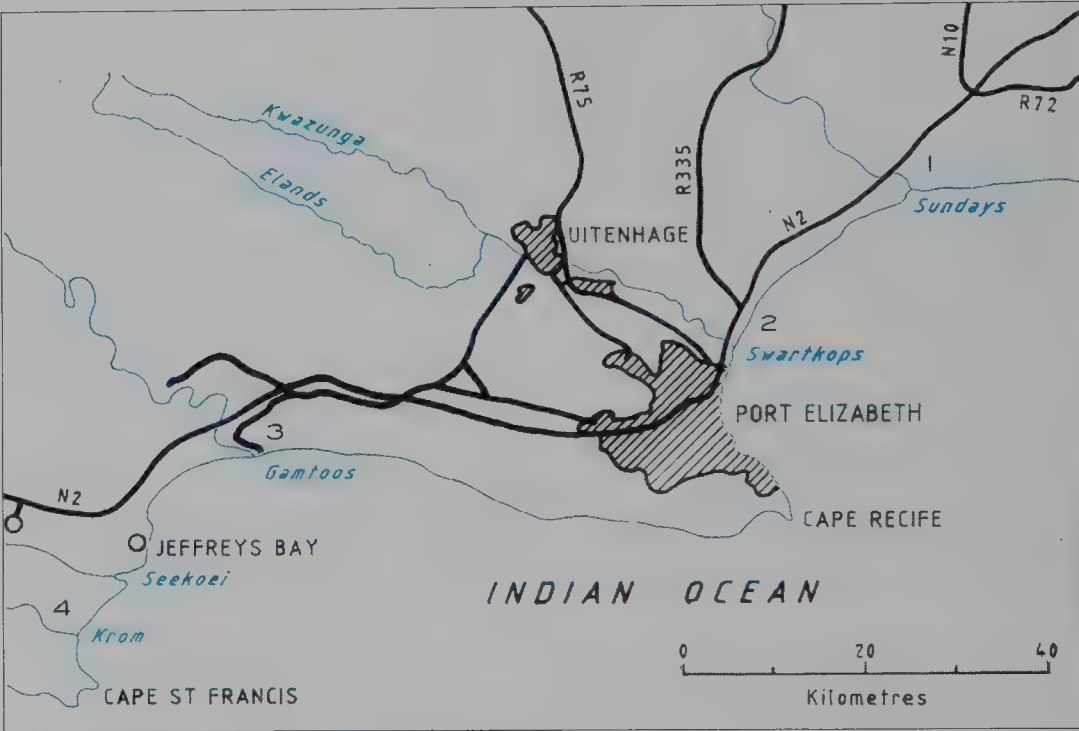


FIGURE 24:ESTUARIES IN THE VICINITY OF PORT ELIZABETH

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
GRUNTER	POMADASYS COMMERSIONII												
SPRINGER / SKIPJACK	ELOPS MACHNATA												
LEERVIS / GARRICK	LICHIA AMIA												
KOB	ARGYROSOMUS JAPONICUS												
GURNARD	PLATYCEPHALUS INDICUS												

TABLE 3. RELATIVE SEASONAL ABUNDANCE OF CERTAIN EASTERN CAPE FISH SPECIES

Nevertheless, there is plenty of potential. The best fishing is from September through to April. The most common species are kob, skipjack, leerfish and grunter. Skipjack and leeries are flyrod favourites as they avidly seize a fly and put up a superb fight. Until a few years ago grunter were regarded as being almost impossible to take on fly. Gradually, as various new flies and methods were tried, anglers started taking them with greater regularity and nowadays the Sundays yields a fair share of these hard fighters. Although it is undoubtedly one of the best kob rivers in the country, getting these fish to take flies consistently is still problematical. For an angler with the ambition of catching a big kob on fly, this is certainly the place to try and crack the code. Gurnard (*Platycephalus indicus*) are occasionally taken on fly but usually when anglers are fishing for other species.

The Pearson Park resort, Tel. (041) 68-0040, is divided between two caravan parks, one at the mouth of the river and the other a little further up. Both of these have launching ramps. Should one prefer home comforts then look no further than the Riverview Guest House, Tel. (041) 68-0140.

### **SWARTKOPS RIVER (2)**

The Swartkops, which enters the sea a short distance north of Port Elizabeth, is one of the top saltwater flyfishing rivers in the country. It is renowned for catches of skipjack, grunter and leerfish and during peak season the banks are literally lined with flyfishermen. The best months are September through to April. During winter some elf and small resident leerfish are taken. Because of good access roads the Swartkops can be fished from the side for many kilometres. Skipjack and leerfish favour the mouth at low tide, at the last of the outgoing tide and at the first of the incoming tide. Other productive spots along the river are Modder Spruit, Brickfields, Red House and Perseverance. The Swartkops is one of the few localities where flyrodders have managed to entice grunter to take a fly. Boat anglers should note that all craft must be registered and inspected for life jackets and safety features at the Nature Conservation Department premises on the river.

Visitors to Port Elizabeth have an enormous variety of accommodations to choose from. The Publicity Bureau has a list of bed-and-breakfast establishments as well as of caravan and camping grounds.



### **GAMTOOS RIVER (3)**

The Gamtoos River flows into the sea about 50 kilometres west of Port Elizabeth. The same species that frequent the Sundays River are also present here and, likewise the best fishing is from September to April. The section near the mouth produces mainly leerfish. From above the Gamtoos Ferry Hotel there is good flyfishing for skipjack and leerfish, especially during February when swimming prawns are in the river in great numbers. Although there is some fishing from the banks it is far better to fish the Gamtoos from a boat in order to reach the better spots. There are three launching ramps on the river. The first is close to the mouth within the Algoa Regional Services camping ground. The second is about 5 kilometres up the river in the Kingsway Caravan Park. The third is above the bridge at the Gamtoos Ferry Hotel. A launching fee is charged at all three. Boats have to be registered and this can be done at the Gamtoos Ferry Hotel.

The hotel caters specifically for anglers but it is a long ride if you want to fish the lower reaches of the river. The Kingsway Caravan Park is about midway between the upper section and the mouth and is very well organised and managed. Still closer to the mouth is the caravan park run by Algoa Regional Services. It also provides tenting sites.

### **KROMME RIVER (4)**

The Kromme River flows into the sea near the villages of Cape St Francis and St Francis Bay. The area is known for the many man-made canals, which form an intricate network of waterways branching off the Kromme River. The shorebound flyrodder has an excellent chance of catching some fine fish near the mouth of the river and from many other spots along the banks. Boat anglers score well above the bridge. The Kromme is best from September to April but flyfishermen frequently have good catches of leerfish and elf in winter. Besides the many private launching ramps there is also one controlled by Regional Services. Boats must be registered with the local authorities.

There are numerous caravan parks, holiday apartments and guesthouses. The Publicity Bureau can supply further information.

The coastline from Cape St Francis westwards to the provincial boundary has few flyfishing opportunities. It is extremely rocky, pounded by strong surf and virtually all the rivers in this region lie within the Tsitsikamma Coastal National Park. Fishing is not permitted in the park.

**INFORMATION AND FACILITIES**

Flyfishing tackle, expert advice and up-to-date information on currently active fishing spots in the area covered above can be obtained from Alcock's Fishing Tackle in Port Elizabeth. Phone or fax (041) 56-0202 and ask for Chad or Lando. Details regarding accommodation at or close to any of the venues mentioned above is available from information offices or Publicity Bureaux in the major towns or villages.





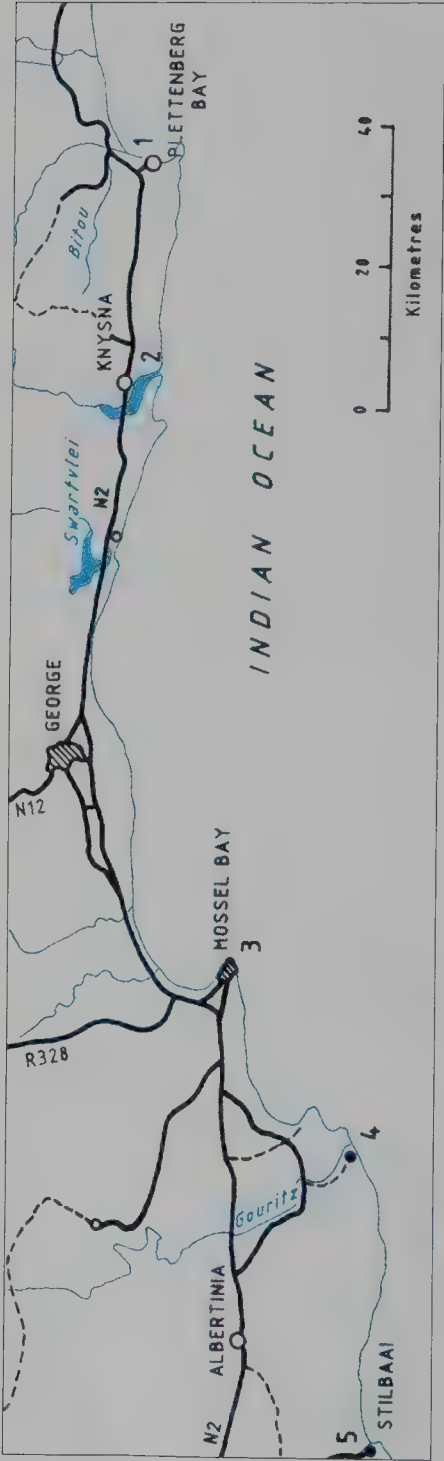


FIGURE 25A: FLYFISHING VENUES ALONG THE COAST FROM KEURBOOMS RIVER TO STILBAAI

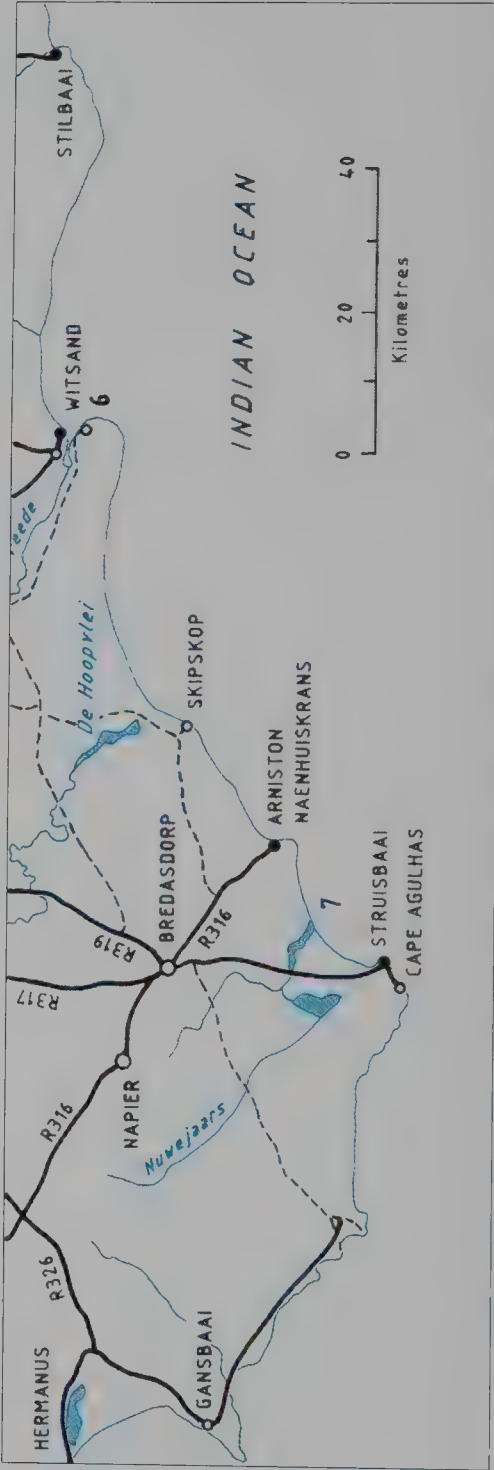


FIGURE 25B: FLYFISHING VENUES ALONG THE COAST FROM STILBAAI TO HERMANUS

By Greg Clarke



THE WESTERN CAPE COASTLINE is unique in Africa in being bordered by two oceans. The Indian Ocean coast on the south (**Figure 25A,B**) is washed by the warm waters of the Agulhas Current whereas the Atlantic coast on the west (**Figure 15**) is under the influence of the cold Benguela Current from Antarctica. This meeting of two oceans is a complex phenomenon, which is reflected in the weather patterns and fish species occurring at the southern tip of Africa. Some fishes are tolerant of conditions in both oceans - others are not. Superimposed on this is the pronounced seasonal migration pattern of certain species up and down the coast. All these elements have a notable effect on how, where and when the Western Cape flyangler practices his sport.

The fishing season along the Cape coast is determined to a large extent by water temperature: when the warm water arrives so do the fish (except snoek). Strong southeasterly winds usually mean cold green water in False Bay whereas southwesterlies commonly bring in warm blue water. In bad weather it is still possible to fish the lagoons, where, in fact, we have had some of our best days when the wind was really pumping. Around Knysna and Plettenberg Bay the weather is more settled but heavy summer rain is not uncommon and this can dirty the lagoons. Moreover, this area is not immune to the influx of cold water in summer and one January I measured a chilly 11° C inside the mouth of the Knysna lagoon.

With such pronounced variation in climatic and oceanographic conditions it is not surprising that the seas around the Western Cape coast harbour an enormous variety of fishes of interest to the commercial as well as recreational fishermen. Leerfish (*Lichia amia*), also known as leervis, elf (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) and kob (*Argyrosomus japonicus*), occur off both coastlines albeit to a lesser extent along the West Coast. Yellowtail (*Seriola lalandi*), tuna (*Thunnus spp*), skipjack (*Elops machnata*), katonkel (*Scomberomorus commerson*) and grunter (*Pomadasys commersonnii*) are primarily Indian Ocean species although yellowtail migrate sporadically around Cape Point and up the west coast. Grunter range as far westward as De Mond near Hermanus; small



numbers of skipjack (springer) reach the Breede River and katonkel rarely venture west of Mossel Bay. All the aforementioned species are summer visitors to Western Cape shores departing again in autumn. Whether all summer fish head for warmer waters in winter is a moot point because, not infrequently some of these species are caught locally during the winter months. I suspect some fishes go into a semidormant state when the water temperature drops below a certain level as winter approaches. With the exception of kob and grunter, whose movements are not well known, the others migrate eastwards, reaching as far as KwaZulu-Natal waters in winter. The return migration commences in spring. Snoek, by contrast, are cold-water fish. They migrate southwards along the West Coast in autumn and winter. The shoals round Cape Point and enter False Bay in late winter or spring from where they continue eastwards for a short distance before disappearing in the vastness of the southern oceans. The arrival of the snoek each year is eagerly awaited along the West Coast.

Leervis appear in our waters in October and depart again in May, although small ones can be caught all year at Plettenberg Bay. The yellowtail season lasts from October to July with spring and autumn generally providing the best fishing when the weather is more settled. February to March is a particularly good time in the Struisbaai area. Elf start working their way westwards along the coast during September. Most fish are caught in the Strandfontein – Strand – Gordon's Bay area. The season is closed from 1 September to 30 November. Boat anglers who are prepared to travel offshore can catch snoek just about all year round. In summer the shoals lie off Stompneus Bay, St. Helena Bay and Yzerfontein. In winter they drift southward to Table Bay and around Cape Point into False Bay. Large flies, wire leaders and lead-core lines are prerequisites for catching snoek. Spring and autumn are generally the best times for tuna especially when the southwester is blowing. The fish are frequently very far offshore and only experienced skippers in seaworthy craft should attempt the journey. Skipjack start arriving in the Plettenberg Bay – Knysna area in mid-October and depart again in March. West of this area they are caught only sporadically. Always look for them in warm water. Bonito frequent the Plettenberg Bay – Struisbaai area from November to March but do not venture inshore. Kob are around from October to May and will take streamers fished on intermediate or

sinking lines. The size of the fly is directly proportional to the angler's ambition but they are not easy fish to tempt with fly tackle. Mullet are available all year but are easier to locate when the water is clear. They are spooky fish and a light line with a long fine leader is essential. Try chumming to bring and keep them within flycasting range. Mackerel frequent the area from October to March. In the past there used to be a good run into Saldanha Bay in midwinter. You need a boat, some chum and small bright flies and bingo! Grunter visit our area from August to May but are very difficult to take on fly. The only area I know of where they are caught with any consistency is in the Swartkops River in the Eastern Cape.

In the Western Cape you will be fishing blind most of the time, whether it be in estuaries, along the shore or at sea. You will be casting into seemingly empty water waiting for the fish to come to your fly. Wind will be a key factor. Make sure you select rods, lines, reels and flies that will work for you and learn to use your equipment efficiently.

In my opinion an 8-weight line is as light as you want to go. It will handle a 13-millimetre popper easily and do a reasonable job with the 16-millimetre size if the wind is not too strong. Saltwater-taper or bass-bug lines are easier to handle in windy conditions. A floating or intermediate full line or shooting head is a good choice for fishing poppers or streamers on or near the surface. Our experience has been that Airflo intermediate running line outlasts the other available brands by a wide margin. For snoek and kob a maximum density flyline or leadcore head is essential to sink the fly to the proper depth. Our preferred running line for these very fast sinking heads is the so-called "snoek line" of the Western Cape professional fishermen: basically an inexpensive mono available in 35-to-50 kilogram breaking strain. It casts like a bomb and is relatively tangle free provided that you give it a good stretch beforehand.

Saltwater rods take an awful lot of knocks in our waters and from bitter experience my first choice lies with the slightly thicker-walled rods rather than the ultra fast, ultra slim thin-walled jobs. Many manufacturers now offer some form of guarantee against breakage. I like an uplocking reel seat and a full Wells cork grip. A short fighting butt is essential. Large guides facilitate the passage of bulky knots and, in my opinion, increase casting distance.

Unless you are going for tuna, a reel with a capacity of flyline plus approximately





200 metres of appropriate backing is adequate. It must be robust, corrosion resistant and should have an exposed rim as well as a click or check to prevent overwinds. An adjustable drag is nice but not a necessity. To cast the larger poppers properly a heavy-butted salt-water leader is essential. Terminate the leader with a shock tippet testing 15 kilogram or more and use a short length of solid trolling wire for toothy species such as katonkel, snoek and large elf.

My number one choice of fly, without any doubt, is a popper. Don't come to the Cape without lots of them - preferably big and white ones. Skippies, leeries, elf and yellowtail really nail them and, in the slightly murky water, which we experience occasionally, they are detected more readily than any other type of fly. Popper sizes range from a 10-millimetre diameter body on a size 2 long-shank hook to 19-millimetre diameter on a size 4/0 hook. I find I can fish a popper confidently longer than I can other flies, probably because I have something to focus on. More often than not you will be aware of the fish's presence before he takes and the take itself will be clearly visible. Exciting stuff! Wool-head Mullets and Lefty's Deceivers in white or dominantly white are good all-round streamers and are popular with local flyrodders. Surf Candies and Clouser Minnows are durable patterns and perform well on elf and snoek. They should be tied with white bellies and blue, green or chartreuse backs to which a bit of flash has been added. Tarpon flies, such as Whistlers, in orange and yellow are favoured by skipjack addicts. If you are prepared to work hard, try for grunter with shrimp or prawn imitations.

A few words about accessories. Do wear polarized glasses and a hat for the obvious reasons as well as to protect eyes and head from flies being cast. For the rock and surf fisherman a wet suit is nice if you have one, a stripping basket is a must in many areas and a wading staff is handy. Appropriate shoes are indispensable and don't forget the sun block.

The first seven venues are shown in Figures 25A and 25B.

#### **KEURBOOMS RIVER (1)**

A most beautiful tidal river and estuary make this a very pleasant place to fish although the floating weed can try your patience at times, especially at spring tide. Heavy rain can put the fish off the bite for several days. The fish are not particularly large but the abundance and variety of species and the usually fine weather make up

for that. On a recent visit friends and I got leervis, springer, kob, elf, moonies and even a white stumpnose and a mullet, all on fly and popper. A boat is not essential but it does give the angler greater mobility and access to much more water. There is a slipway at the road bridge over the Keurbooms River.

**KNYSNA (2)**

This magnificent lagoon, which greedy developers apparently want to destroy as quickly as possible, hosts the elusive springer or skipjack in summer, which together with leervis are the main targets for flyfishers. The large springer found here are the poor man's tarpon: spectacular to hook, difficult to land, always great fun. Poppers or streamers work well. I suggest very sharp barbless hooks. Small hooks set well whereas larger ones may hold better but do not penetrate as readily. With many kilometres of channels and flats available to the angler anything can happen. On a recent visit, while standing in thigh-deep water, a very large kob swam into my leg, almost knocking me over. Brown-corduroy time I tell you! Unless you are a very experienced skipper, keep away from The Heads and beware of the mud flats at low tide opposite Belvedere and the Yacht Club. Slipways are provided at Brenton On Lake and Crab Creek.

**MOSSEL BAY (3)**

This is the home turf of Robin Fick, the well-known flyrodder. Robin has been getting leervis and katonkel in the bay with plenty of elf thrown in. Mossel Bay is also a good base from which to fish the Gourits River estuary, which is still largely underdeveloped. Some of the rivers in the immediate area offer good fishing for grunter and leervis. Better use the Yacht Club facilities to launch your boat as the public slip can be very exciting in any kind of sea.

**GOURITS RIVER(4)**

The mouth of the Gourits River is approximately 65 kilometres by road from Mossel Bay. I have only fished it once but heavy rain muddied the water and cut down any chance of success. The river really looks good, however, and Robin Fick, has caught leervis up to 9 kilograms. The Gourits is, of course, renowned for its big kob. There is a slipway for launching boats.



### **STILBAAI (5)**

A smallish river, which, during the holiday season, is very popular with swimmers and difficult, therefore, to fish seriously. Better results may be obtained by using a boat and fishing further upstream. Kob are frequently caught upriver on trolled Rapalas so there is no reason why they should not take a large streamer.

### **WITSAND AND CAPE INFANTA (6)**

Situated at the mouth of the Breede River is the largest estuary in South Africa. The mouth is open all year and the river used to be navigable by large ocean-going boats as far as Port Beaufort. The Breede is the home of huge kob, leervis, elf, grunter, steenbras and other species. It is also the most southerly estuary frequented by springer but they do not arrive in sufficient numbers to constitute a viable fishery and the few caught each summer are mostly by accident. The best places for leervis are off the sandbanks when and where tidal rips form. For grunter the mud flats at high tide and the channels at low tide are the main hunting grounds. The sheer extent of the Breede River estuary makes the use of a boat almost mandatory although it is possible to walk up to Green Point which is a good place to fish from the side.

### **STRUISBAAI AND ARNISTON (7)**

An area teeming with fish but still largely underutilised by flyfishermen whether from the shore or from boats. Huge areas of fairly shallow water cry out to have a fly worked through them. A boat is necessary but launching one at Arniston can be a hairy experience. Struisbaai has a very large slip in the harbour but at low tide the Bottelgat, with any kind of a sea running is sure to raise your adrenaline levels.

The venues that follow are all shown on **Figure 15**.

### **DE MOND (24)**

For anglers who like fishing during office hours this is it, because access and fishing are only permitted between 08:00 and 16:30. As for most waters in the Cape, a freshwater licence is needed to get past the gatekeeper. Small leervis, grunter, kob and huge mullet are present in season. The mullet are a real challenge on small streamers, specifically the Stoat's Tail. Stealth, patience and persistence are called for.

### **HERMANUS LAGOON (25)**

This water is my personal favourite. Every year Hermanus produces leervis in excess of 5 kilograms and during the past year the lagoon experienced an

uncommonly good run of elf. A boat is essential to cover most of the channel where the big ones cruise. Boats can be launched at Maanskynbaai or Prawn Flats where dinghies may also be hired. If you are really energetic, you can walk around to Elf Point and fish the channel from the bank or, alternatively, swim across the channels and save yourself a long walk. Poppers almost invariably provide the most action. Repeated casting is essential so floating shooting heads make life a lot easier. Take heed of the wind that can pick up rather quickly at times.

**BOT RIVER (26)**

This estuary produces big leervis and elf. When it is open to the sea the channel is a good place to fish. Later in the season, after the mouth closes, fishing alongside the weed beds is more productive. At times it is difficult to find fish on this large, almost featureless stretch of water and a chum slick drifting downwind may be the way to go. A boat is essential to fish the weedbeds and a great advantage elsewhere on the water. When the mouth is open the channel can be reached on foot. At times the southeaster bounces off the mountain and blows offshore chilling the sea. When this happens, a falling tide is a better bet.

**PALMIET AND KLEINMOND LAGOONS (27)**

These two small estuaries are well patronised by picnickers over weekends but even so it is possible to catch small fish. The water on an incoming tide can be decidedly chilly at times.

**BLAKE'S BEACH, STRAND (28)**

Blake's Beach is the bay to the east of the Strand Jetty. A series of reefs run out to sea offering anglers who are not afraid to get wet many casting platforms from which to cover the water. At low tide one has to wade or swim out to them to fish. Those who feel like staying reasonably dry can fish off the beach, as fish have been taken no more than 10 metres out. Do watch your backcast, as it is considered bad form to hook bathers, strollers or rubber-neckers. This is an area that is either hot or cold. It has the advantage that one can fish right-handed even in a stiff southeaster.

**SANDVLEI (MUIZENBERG) (29)**

During the summer of 1993/94 quite a few leervis and elf were caught in this estuary. Fishing in 1994/95 was not as good probably due to construction work on a bridge at the mouth of the lagoon but in 1995/96 some huge leeries were taken once





again. Persistence and hard work are needed. Shore fishing is the norm and in addition to leervis one can also try for elf, mullet, bass and even carp. Marina Da Gama is a good place to fish when it is very windy.

#### **CAPE POINT AND FALSE BAY (30)**

Cape Point needs no introduction. Weather permitting, pelagic species such as yellowtail, snoek and tuna can be caught. Because of the rough seas, however, it is an area that should only be tackled in seaworthy boats. If you are fishing deep sea off Cape Point at least fifty percent of the time you'll be battling to stand, so find somewhere to wedge yourself in and then cast. Fishing from shore still needs to be explored and developed but kelp and onshore winds make fishing difficult in most areas. Boats can be launched from Gordon's Bay, Harbour Island, Strand, Miller's Point, Buffel's Bay and, with difficulty, from Hangklip.

#### **HOUT BAY (31)**

When the southeaster blows the seas west of the peninsula flatten out and become icy cold. For those who are prepared to fish deep, this is a good time to fish for snoek, if they are around, and big hottentot. Remember, if you land in the cold water you can die in a very short time so take great care. Hout Bay and Granger Bay offer safe launching facilities.

#### **MILNERTON (32)**

This lagoon is very close to town but it is always worth a try. It is not big water, and one can easily wade the lower reaches and fish into the channel. This is seemingly the most southerly estuary that is visited in summer by West Coast leervis on their migration down the coast. Elf and harders (mullet) are also present.

#### **YZERFONTEIN (33)**

For anglers who relish crowds and would like to catch snoek in shallow water this is the place. The best way to accomplish this is to get hold of a seaworthy boat, then just follow the professional fishermen out to sea. This area produces lots of snoek, which are great fun on a fly rod. Make sure you are accomplished at launching and reversing: the pros are not renowned for their patience when the snoek are running.

**LANGEBAAN (34)**

This is a large expanse of water and it is best fished from a boat that can be launched off the beach or at the Yacht Club. Yellowtail and big elf have been caught so far but the enormous flyfishing potential of this area has hardly been tapped.

**BERG RIVER (PORT OWEN) (35)**

Plenty of small elf can be caught here in the summer months but once again its great potential is largely ignored. According to the locals even leeries put in their appearance. Whether they come from Angola or round the Point from Natal is not known. A small boat or canoe would help to cover the water more effectively.

**FACILITIES AND INFORMATION**

For information on fishing conditions, guides or boat hire contact the following persons:

**CAPE TOWN:**

Alan Stewart : Tel. (021) 405-5166(o/h) or (021) 75-2533(a/h)  
Greg Clarke : Tel. (021) 511-0290(o/h) or (021) 58-3271(a/h)  
Tim Rolfston : Tel. (021) 683-3653(o/h) or (021) 788-7611(a/h)

**MOSSEL BAY AREA:**

Robin Fick : Tel. (0441) 74-7420(o/h) or (0444) 96-6283(a/h)

**KNYSNA:**

Neil Hockly : Tel. (0445) 23705

As far as is known, the only tackle shop catering specifically for flyfishermen is in Cape Town. Phone Upstream at (021) 794-4314.

Except where otherwise noted, accommodation of various types is available in or near all the venues listed above and details can be obtained from local tourist information centres or travel agents. During the peak months of December and January these resorts are very popular with holidaymakers and reservations are essential.



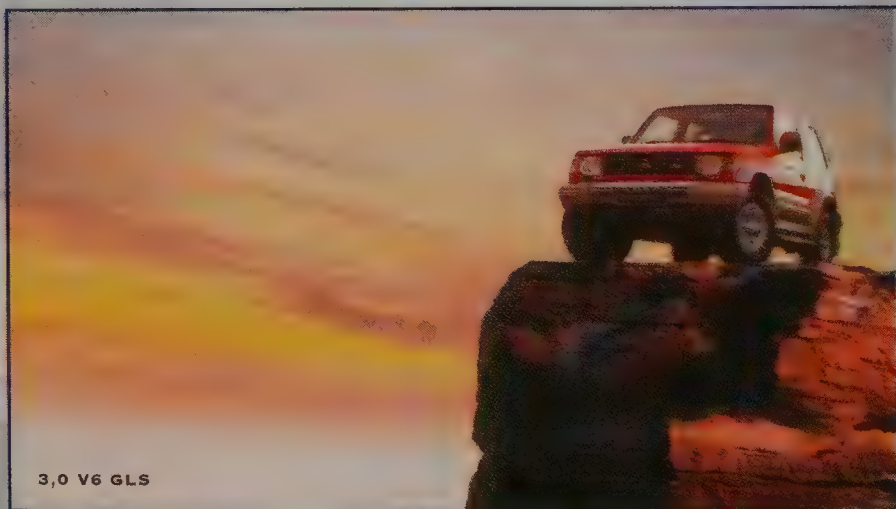
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By Joni Botha



OUR FIRST VIEW OF THE BAZARUTO ARCHIPELAGO (20, Figure 18) from the air starts you twitching immediately – a chain of tropical isles extending northwards with deep blue ocean to the east and a vast tidal-flat system to the west. The chain starts with Ilha Margaruque about 12 kilometres north of Ponta São Sebastião on the mainland. A gap or channel approximately 4 kilometres wide separates Margaruque from Ilha Benguerra. The famous “Kingfish Alley”, about 2 kilometres across lies between Ilha Benguerra and Ilha Bazaruto. The islands increase in size from south to north except for Santa Carolina (Paradise) Island that nestles in the lee of Bazaruto. The whole system, but especially the flats, is affected by pronounced tidal changes. At high tide the flats resemble any other bay along the coast. At low tide they are a maze of exposed sandbars and deep inviting channels. With its fast currents and generally persistent strong winds, this area is for the experienced saltwater flyangler. If its visual appearance lifts your spirits, the conditions, unless ideal, will certainly try to knock them down. The weather is unpredictable at best. If you are inexperienced I most strongly suggest you obtain the services of a competent fishing guide.

The summer months are best for weather and fishing. But beware – the heat can be awesome, and along with the constant wind, dehydration on long beach trips is a real worry. So go prepared with a water bottle and drink only bottled water. The hot weather alternates with cooler rainy periods that bring much relief. The winter months are far milder, and are great for getting away from the cold Highveld. The prevalence of certain species and fishing patterns change in winter – there are less kingfish but far more queen and king mackerel.

I consider the Islands a tough flyfishing venue for the inexperienced shorebound angler, unless he is content to catch rats and inice. It then becomes a long and expensive trip. To get the best out of the islands you need a boat, if not all the time then at last part of the time; otherwise you might as well catch many of these fish





species at KwaZulu-Natal or Wild Coast hot spots. If you decide to holiday on the islands with flyfishing as your main reason for being there, then may I suggest the following places.

#### **PONTAMINGO**

This operation had not yet opened when the first edition of this book appeared. According to Richard Schumann it is situated on the San Sebastian Peninsula due south of the archipelago. The camp of thatched bomas and double-room en-suite safari tents is set up on the dunes overlooking the ocean. Pontamingo is for the intrepid angler wanting a truly “get away from it all” holiday.

#### **ILHA MARGARUQUE**

The north point of Margaruque is frequented by large kingfish, especially on the outgoing tide. The bigger the rip caused by the fast water rounding the point, the more productive it seems to be. I suggest casting as large a popper as possible into the rip, followed by a fast retrieve. The kingfish (*Caranx* spp) are large and almost impossible to land, due to the steep rocky drop-off. Invariably they cut you off as soon as you get them close. Another spot, worth trying at night, is in the floodlit area right in front of Margaruque Hotel. This works best on a high tide when, just after dark, smallish bigeye (*C. sexfasciatus*) and greenspot kingfish attack the baitfish and squid attracted by the light. We found there was a definite swing away from poppers to Lefty's Deceivers after dark.

The rest of the island (a fit person can walk around it in just over an hour) is fairly bland in both its vegetation and flyfishing areas. When last I visited Margaruque the hotel was pretty basic with only cold water available in the showers. I understand, however, that it has been renovated or refurbished since. There is a short landing strip behind the hotel. Boats are available for hire but I suggest your travel agent ascertains beforehand what is available and in working order and what the cost will be. Not all boats are suited to flyfishing and fuel prices are horrific in the archipelago. The best area nearby is the San Sebastian Reef, where huge kingfish and plenty of sailfish have been caught on conventional tackle.

#### **ILHA BENGUERRA**

Benguela Island Lodge (the name may change soon) is unquestionably the first choice in accommodation in the archipelago. It has a distinct bushveld feel

about it with its raised floors, wood and thatch. Aside from the Polana Hotel, it offers, in my opinion, the most luxurious accommodation in Moçambique.

For the shore-based flyfisherman Benguerra is perhaps not such a great destination. The locals have stripped most of the flats of marine life with nets of such fine mesh that few creatures of any size manage to escape. Any dreams of bonefish (*Albula vulpes*) should be set aside. The lodge does provide transport around the island and bends over backwards to accommodate the whims of all fishermen. The best areas are the northwestern point and the reefs on the southwestern side, both of which can be reached by either boat or vehicle. Small kingfish, mostly greenspot, are plentiful off the northwestern point. A yellow streamer produced consistently good catches over a two-week period. King mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*), small bonito (*Sarda orientalis*) and wolf herring (*Chirocentrus dorab*) in summer, and queen mackerel (*Scomberomorus plurilineatus*) in winter, are apt to take a fly off this point. Hi-D lines with large yellow, chartreuse or white-and-orange streamers stripped in quickly provided the best results. Large surface poppers also caught fish – sometimes right at our feet. The nearby northeastern point is a good spot for pompano (*Trachinotus* spp.). They are relatively easy to catch on a well-sunk shrimp pattern. The reefs on the southwestern side drop off into a deep channel and you will need a line basket. Expect various kingfish species and small bonito. The kings forage close in on falling as well as rising tides and it is just possible you may hook into a 15-kilogram fish. Landing them however is another matter as they dive into the reefs almost immediately and cut you off. Small kingfish abound and are easily caught on small poppers, streamers and shrimp imitations. Shoals of kawa-kawa (eastern little tuna) in the 1-kilogram class pass by these reefs on the pushing tide. They are incredible fun on a 6-weight outfit and always amaze us with their powerful runs relative to their size. They love small white-and-grey streamers, but find sparkle shrimp imitations irresistible. Remember to take sufficient fresh water with you no matter how long you plan to fish in any particular spot – the sun is fierce. Being honest, I would have to say that the shoreline fishing is not inspiring but the island is picturesque and the lodge outstanding. Non-anglers generally love it!

Offshore flyfishing off Benguerra is another matter altogether! This is outstanding as long as you know what you're doing or you have a good guide to show



you how. The lodge runs well-maintained ski-boats, which have reasonably comfortable decks to fish from. This form of flyfishing is my first choice in the archipelago but, be warned – it is prohibitively expensive. Before booking, check the present boat and fuel prices. Three forms of flyfishing have worked extremely well for us.

The first is to find a good reef and either drift it or anchor and work its edges. Our favourite areas are Kingfish Alley; the outer (eastern) side of Two-mile Reef; the channel off the north point of Margaruque; any of the reefs on the seaward side of Bazaruto, especially Sailfish Bay; or the wreck halfway down Benguerra on the seaward side. The most consistent producer is a well-sunk weighted 3/0 to 7/0 streamer on a Hi-D type line. A large popper on at least a 2/0 hook is also tops. Chumming is a useful method to bring on the fish but also the sharks. It helps if you have a companion who can tease the fish up by retrieving a large hookless spinning popper – Creek Chubs are excellent for this purpose. You simply cast to the chasing fish and as your fly lands your companion stops his retrieve. This often results in the fish transferring to the fly. I suggest a 10-to-12 weight outfit for this form of fishing.

The second method is to chase the feeding birds in the early mornings and evenings. This can use an incredible amount of fuel but produces outstanding results when you encounter schools of big kingfish, king mackerel and tuna. A well-sunk streamer around the fringes of the surface activity draws the most strikes. The best colours are white, chartreuse, pink and yellow. Poppers also work but, surprisingly, we found them to be less consistent.

The third method involves trolling bird chains and hookless belly strip teasers. Along the seaward side of Bazaruto Island it would bring the fish up from virtually any depth, whether far out or within 100 metres of the shore. Schools of fish, with individuals in excess of 10 kilograms, consistently pounded these rigs, which were then hand retrieved to draw the excited fish right to the transom. In this state the fish will eat anything you throw into the water, even orange peels. We used this method effectively in the summer months but never found out whether it was successful in the cooler winter season. I understand that at present, for one reason or another, this technique is seldom used.

Call Rod and Reel Africa on (011) 447-2187 for information on flyfishing trips to Benguerra and reservations.

**ILHA BAZARUTO**

Bazaruto is a name that conjures up excitement in many fishermen's minds. This island, the largest and northernmost, is fondly remembered by an older generation of anglers as a hot spot for marlin and sailfish. This it continues to be, while also boasting a richness of tunas, kingfishes and just about every other Indian Ocean species. Bazaruto Lodge is situated well to the north on the leeward (western) shore of the island and provides good lodging and good food at affordable rates. Boats and vehicle transport are available from the lodge to reach the rather distant flyfishing spots. The four ski-boats, like many others on the islands, are not rigged for flyfishing and are, therefore, far from ideal. Just think of them as casting platforms and use a throw-net to cover your standing area to prevent line hang-ups on the many protrusions. Guides are provided. Sabal Bay Lodge, about midway down the island offers acceptable accommodation for 38 guests. It had four ski-boats designed specifically with flyfishing in mind as well as experienced guides who were all expert saltwater flyfishermen. At the time of writing there were rumours of extensive changes taking place at the Sabal Bay Lodge so it would be best to check it out beforehand.

Shore-based flyfishing can be hot, if everything is going your way. The best spots are around strong current areas in the north and south with the southern point offering consistently the best shot at a big fish. As at Benguerra, when the wind is up it can ridicule any attempt at casting a fly. In the northern area a sandbar jutting out from the island is very popular with fishermen using bait or lures and they have good results. For flyfishermen, who cannot throw that far it is not ideal but the sandy bottom at least makes wading and casting fairly simple. Pompano and small kingfish abound in the shallows, whereas the bigger fish roam further out and occasionally move to within casting range. We have found early morning and evenings good, especially on a pushing tide. Bait anglers catch fair numbers of bonefish but our attempts with flies were unsuccessful. The many reefs off the eastern shore require considerably more skill with a fly-rod than on the sandbar. Firstly, there are waves to deal with whilst standing on razor-sharp rocks, which continually snag your line unless you use a line-basket. Secondly, the wind is normally persistent down this shoreline and that hampers casting even more. On the upside is the chance of hooking





a fair-sized kingfish, especially the bluefin variety (*Caranx melampygus*), which loves these onshore reefs. One is tempted to use a floating line to stay out of trouble, but fortune favours the brave, and we found that most strikes came on a fast-stripped, well-sunk streamer. Greenspot kingfish are found along with the blues, but also inhabit the bays between the reefs. They average perhaps 3 kilos and will eat just about anything presented to them. They are possibly the best targets for the inexperienced fly angler. By switching to a smaller baitfish or shrimp pattern, many small reef fish can also be caught. Big surface poppers are always worth trying in the turbulent water around the reefs. Small kingfish will attack a big popper but big kingfish demand only big poppers and treat small ones with disdain. For me, a big popper starts at 2/0. The southeastern point of the island protrudes into Kingfish Alley. There is no doubt that huge kingfish (*C. ignoblis*) are plentiful in this area as we have hooked many. Landing them, however, is nearly impossible. The reef falls away steeply into deep water and the fish simply cut you off on the jagged edges. On the several occasions that we fished there we managed to land in total only two reasonable kingfish. Other species present are large wolf herring, kawa-kawa, queen mackerel, king mackerel, and barracuda (sea pike). This is one area where you don't have to cast a very long line, and many of the smaller bays are full of kingfish around the 1-kilogram mark. The reefs are razor sharp and good foot protection is a necessity. On the western shore there is perhaps only one area worth mentioning. Kingfish Alley bifurcates into two channels, the one swinging southwestward around Bengueria and the other northwestward around Bazaruto. This northwestern channel hugs the shore until it comes up against Ponto Gengareme. It is then diverted westward around the point and meets up with the southbound current and the resultant eddy has washed out a deep depression. This depression forms a holding area for fish moving through the channel system. The ledge along the point has produced good fish, especially bonito and kawa-kawa, and is fairly unique as a shore venue.

To make a Bazaruto flyfishing trip truly worthwhile requires offshore fishing from one of the lodge's ski-boats. Unfortunately, this requires a long and expensive run from the lodge to the open sea around either the north or south points. If you choose to fish the highly productive Sailfish Bay area, you will have to round the northern sandbar. This area used to be, and probably still is, incredibly rich in large

fish. We found that trolling two teasers, each consisting of one medium-sized bird trailing five softhead Konas at one-metre intervals, would turn the fish on to such an extent that we only had to engage gear and travel fifteen metres before a fish would rip into the skirts. Using this technique attracted an amazing variety of huge fish but unfortunately also a lot of sharks. Offshore we found that the fish were not selective – if they had the fly presented where they could see it, and it wasn't "attacking" them, they would eat it. The concentration of fish in this area was so great that blind fishing a deeply sunken streamer was almost as productive. I am told that the fish are nowhere near as plentiful these days as they were a few years ago. The waters around the islands are subject to heavy fishing pressure from conventional fishermen who do not yet embrace the catch-and-release ethic to a noticeable extent. In this area it is a good idea to use nothing less than a 10-weight outfit with a 12 being my preferred choice. Many fish exceed 10 kilograms and the sharks are hungry, so you need lifting power. The most common pelagic species are marlin, barracuda (*Sphyræna* spp.), sailfish, wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*), king mackerel, tuna, and kingfish. Occasionally large bottom dwellers will also grab your fly. Two-mile Reef, off the southeastern point of the island is another hot area. This reef attracts an astounding variety of fishes, and is great to explore with a snorkel at low tide when some of its coral heads are exposed. Fishing a small popper on a 6-weight floating line over the reef itself will result in catching lots of small kingfish, needlefish and reef dwellers. The bulk of the fishing is done on the seaward side of the reef with either a surface or fast sinking rig. On a good day huge ignoblis kingfish are plentiful and easy to hook but I have yet to meet anyone who has boated one of these monsters. This is 12- to 14-weight territory and then some. Out to sea, flocks of birds pinpoint large schools of tuna feeding on the surface and it is always worth a chase in the early morning. If I had to choose only one place to fish within this entire chain of islands it would be Two-mile Reef.

Pestana Hotels and Resorts handle Bazaruto Lodge reservations and their telephone number is (011) 447-3528. For further information on Sabal Bay Lodge and for reservations call Sabal Developments on (011) 849-4890. Andrew Parsons provides expert guiding on a freelance basis. Pre-booking him is essential and can be arranged by phoning (011) 849-4890.



The entire region is high-risk malaria country, so it is necessary to consult your pharmacist or doctor and obtain the appropriate prophylactics. The town of Vilanculos on the mainland has a clinic with basic medical facilities. I strongly suggest that you take out some form of Medical Evacuation Insurance before leaving South Africa. There is a large runway at Vilanculos should such an emergency arise.



By Richard Schumann



FOR VARIETY AND SIZE OF FISH, INHACA ISLAND IS ONE OF the best offshore destinations on the East Coast. Gamefish abound in the seas around the island and the local skippers who are employed by Gone Fishing Safaris, have an excellent knowledge of fish movements and, in addition, are well-versed in what the requirements are for flyfishing from a boat. Gone Fishing Safaris is owned by Irving Stevenson who has spent years researching the waters around the island and is considered one of the leaders in pioneering flyrod tactics for big-game offshore flyfishing.

Of the numerous species one can encounter at Inhaca, the talang or largemouth queenfish (*Scomberoides commersonianus*) is the most sought after flyrod target. A strong fish that can pull as hard as a kingfish and leap like a dorado, they are plentiful in summer around the shallow reefs, wrecks and other structure. Over the last few years Inhaca has been the venue where three flyrod world records were claimed and awarded for this species. On a good day one could expect a number of fish of 6 to 8 kilograms with the odd fish reaching 10 kilograms. Other gamefish that one can expect to encounter, depending on the season, are a variety of kingfish, the most sought after being the giant kingfish (*Caranx ignobilis*), king mackerel (*Scomberomorus commerson*), dorado (*Coryphaena hippurus*), cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*), barracuda (*Sphyraena* spp.) and yellowfin (*Thunnus albacares*) and eastern little tuna (*Euthynnus affinis*).

Most of the fishing is done, as mentioned, over wrecks, reefs and other structure and it is necessary to use fast-sinking lines and weighted flies. During the early morning or late afternoon, or when fishing around the marker buoys along the channels in the Maputo Basin, fish are sometimes found on or near the surface and then it is possible to use floating or intermediate lines. For deep fishing, the most productive fly patterns are the Inhaca Parrot, Clouser Minnow, Mylar Minnow and Lefty's Deceiver in white, chartreuse, red, pink or pearl, tied on 2/0 to 5/0 or larger hooks, and weighted with lead eyes. Popular surface flies are poppers, Dahlbergs and Deceivers in the same colours and sizes as the deep-water flies. Depending on the





size of fish or species targeted, anything from an 8-weight to 12-weight rod would be suitable, but be sure to take along back-up tackle as offshore flyfishing from ski-boats can be heavy on fly tackle.

Besides the Santa Maria Gap at the southern tip of the island, there is not much shore fishing to be had on Inhaca and there are also restricted areas that are off-limits to shore-based anglers.

The forty-room hotel on Inhaca Island has been extensively renovated and is scheduled to reopen in mid-December 1997. For up to date information and bookings call (011) 447-3528 and ask for Laura.



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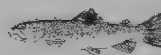
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Use the paper and plastic of your everyday banking to clean up our world, simply open a Nedbank Green Affinity account.



THE GREEN TRUST

Then, every time you use a Nedbank Green Affinity cheque account, credit card, or savings card, Nedbank will automatically make a donation to The Green Trust on your behalf - at little or no cost to you. Giving you the chance to help preserve our natural resources for generations to come.

(Thanks to the support of our Green Affinity account holders, Nedbank has raised more than R17 million for The

Green Trust in seven years. Making it possible to support a multitude of worthy conservation, education and community projects.)

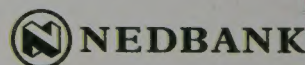
What's more, your Nedbank Green Affinity Credit Card can also be linked to South African Airways' Voyager programme, so you can earn free flights to explore our planet.



SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

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For more information on Nedbank Green Affinity, call 0800 110 180, or visit your nearest Nedbank branch - and add more green to your wallet.



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